

2,000 settlers sign up with Labour Party

OCCUPIED JERUSALEM (AFP) — Some 2,000 Jewish settlers from the West Bank have broken ranks to join the Labour Party of Prime Minister Shimon Peres ahead of expected early elections in May, a party spokesman said Wednesday. Yoram Doni said the settlers had joined the party over the past four months. "This shows that there is a Labour presence in the West Bank settlements," he said. "These settlers have understood what is good for the future of Israel. They know that the Labour Party defends their interests," he said. "We think more and more settlers will sign up with Labour as the elections near," he added. The vast majority of the 140,000 Jewish settlers living among Palestinians on the West Bank and Gaza Strip are strongly opposed to the Labour Party policy of granting autonomy to the Palestinians and vote for conservative and extreme right-wing parties. Most of the new Labour members come from "commuter" settlements near Jerusalem and from the northern West Bank.

Jordan Times

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No concessions in unrest — Bahrain

BEIRUT (AFP) — Bahrain will not make concessions in the face of the unrest which has plagued the Gulf state for more than a year, Information Minister Mohammad Ibrahim Al Muteawa said in an interview published Wednesday. He told the Saudi newspaper Al Ashraq Al Awsat that Manama ruled out concessions "when it concerns the security of the country" and would not open a dialogue with the opposition. "What is happening falls under the category of security and not politics," Mr. Muteawa charged that the "troublemakers" were being manipulated from abroad, in an apparent reference to Iran, and had plastered walls of mosques with portraits of foreign leaders as well as political slogans. "We have not closed the mosques but banned them from being used for anything but prayer," he said. The minister said 360 people had appeared in court and more than 200 others were still being investigated, since trouble first erupted in December 1994. Some 260 of around 600 being held were arrested over the last two months.

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King hosts iftar

AMMAN (Petra) — His Majesty King Hussein on Wednesday hosted an iftar in honour of representatives of the Karak and Madaba governorates as well as the Royal Court personnel. The banquet was attended by His Royal Highness Prince Faisal Ben Al Hussein, several members of the Royal family, Prime Minister Abdul Karim Al Kabariti, Royal Court Chief Awn Khasawneh, the King's advisors and the governors of Karak and Madaba.

Half of Palestinians are under 15

RAMALLAH (AFP) — Almost half of the 2.2 million Palestinians living in the West Bank and Gaza Strip are under the age of 15, according to survey results released on Wednesday. According to the Central Bureau of Statistics, based in Ramallah, 1,330,000 Palestinians live in the West Bank and another 934,000 live in the Gaza Strip. Among the Palestinians, 46.9 per cent are under the age of 15, the bureau said. The average Palestinian family has 6.7 members in the West Bank and 7.8 in the Gaza Strip. Illiteracy affects 23.6 per cent of women and 16 per cent of men, but 17 per cent of Palestinians in the autonomous territories have completed secondary education, and four per cent have university degrees. Palestinians marry relatively young, at the age of 23 for men and 18 for women, while 30 per cent marry their cousins. Polygamy is on the verge of disappearing, representing only 3.2 per cent of marriages on the West Bank and 4.4 per cent in the Gaza Strip.

Demirel hints at fresh elections

ANKARA (AFP) — Turkish President Suleyman Demirel hinted Wednesday at the possibility of fresh general elections after a series of failed attempts to form a government from the current legislature, itself only weeks old. "If parliament cannot produce a government, the Turkish people may produce another parliament," Mr. Demirel told a group of businessmen at a meeting here. "Our sincere wish is the formation of a government shortly to deal with our political and economic problems," he added. "Otherwise" elections could be held one after another until a government receiving a parliamentary vote of confidence emerges.

2 Israeli soldiers wounded in attack

MARJAYOUN (AFP) — At least two Israeli soldiers were wounded in South Lebanon on Wednesday when Iranian-backed Hizbollah guerrillas attacked an army vehicle near the Crusader Castle of Beaufort, security sources said. A Hizbollah spokesman in Beirut claimed responsibility for the attack in the border "security zone" occupied by Israel.

Egypt cracks \$19b bank fraud

CAIRO (AFP) — Three foreigners were arrested after attempting to cheat \$19 billion out of Egyptian banks using false letters of guarantee, police said Wednesday. Police seized eight letters of guarantee forged to look like they were from foreign central banks with false signatures of the heads of state or director of the International Monetary Fund. The letters were intended to cover the withdrawal of 4.27 billion U.S. dollars, 27.5 billion German marks and 200,000 kilograms of gold from Egyptian banks, officials said. The three foreigners, who were not identified, lived in luxury hotels in Cairo and were helped by Egyptian accomplices "who introduced them to senior officials in banking and other important figures in the country."

Peres: Christopher rescued Syria talks

TEL AVIV (AFP) — Prime Minister Shimon Peres credited U.S. Secretary of State Warren Christopher Wednesday for breaking down because of the impending Israeli election campaign.

"I was very afraid at one point that the negotiations could stop. This has already happened twice and can always happen again," Mr. Peres said after a briefing from Mr. Christopher on the U.S. diplomat's latest mission to Syria.

The prime minister said Mr. Christopher "has completed one of the most difficult missions in diplomacy" by assuring Syrian President Hafez Al Assad that expected early elections in Israel this spring would not prevent progress in the struggling peace talks.

"It was quite easy for the Syrian side to misread what was happening here... which could have caused the interruption of the negotiations," he said.

Mr. Christopher "gave them an objective picture and in a very convincing way reassured them that the peace negotiations can be continued, that time would not be wasted no matter what is taking place in our country," Mr. Peres said.

Israeli officials have said Mr. Peres will announce next week that general elections scheduled for October will be moved up to May, in part in hope of giving the Labour government a clear mandate to negotiate with Syria.

They said that during the election campaign — which is likely to highlight the deep

'Elections set for May 28'

ISRAELI PRIME MINISTER Shimon Peres told U.S. Secretary of State Warren Christopher on Wednesday that he had decided to bring general elections forward to May 28, state radio reported. Mr. Peres' Labour Party and the right-wing opposition have been in contact for several days to agree a date for early elections, originally scheduled for Oct. 29. After emerging from the meeting with Mr. Christopher, Mr. Peres refused to give a date for the poll, saying only he would announce his decision next week.

divisions among Israelis over the Syrian peace process — the negotiations could not be expected to make significant progress.

Israeli ministers notably said that the politically sensitive issue of Israel's withdrawal from the occupied Golan Heights could not be realistically tackled in the middle of an election campaign.

Mr. Christopher announced in Damascus Tuesday that Israeli and Syrian negotiators would hold a fourth round of talks at the Wye Plantation outside Washington beginning on Feb. 26. The U.S.-brokered negotiations resumed in December after a six-month freeze.

The official Syrian press hailed Mr. Christopher's efforts on Wednesday but accused Israel of trying to tor-

pedo negotiations with its plans to call early elections.

Mr. Christopher and Mr. Peres both asserted Wednesday that much progress had been made in the talks to date and that movement forward can be maintained.

"I feel very much encouraged that we can continue the negotiations with full respect for the other side and with a serious mind to achieve results in all domains — security, economy, improved relations and comprehensive (peace)," Mr. Peres said.

But he also noted that "there is still a great deal of work before us" and that "very major problems" remain, such as security arrangements to follow a pullout from the Golan and sharing of the plateau's water resources.

"Still, I think that the greatest hope for both Israel and Syria is to go from a strategy of confrontation to a strategy of economic competition and cooperation."

Mr. Christopher said he had drawn three conclusions from his latest shuttle mission: "The negotiations will continue towards peace, the two parties want to reach an agreement in 1996 and they want to reach this objective with our commitment and help."

Earlier Wednesday Mr. Christopher met in the Gaza Strip with Palestinian leader Yasser Arafat and urged him to develop democracy in his autonomous government and to revoke references to Israel's destruction from the Palestinian national covenant.

(Continued on page 7)

Iraq-U.N. talks 'businesslike' and 'in positive atmosphere'

UNITED NATIONS (Agencies) — Iraq and the United Nations resumed talks Wednesday over a possible oil-for-food deal, a U.N. spokeswoman said.

The talks are taking place in a "businesslike and positive atmosphere," said spokeswoman Sylvana Foa, making the first official U.N. comment since the technical talks opened here on Tuesday.

She said that the first meeting Tuesday focused on "procedural matters," after which the Iraqi and U.N. experts "analysed relevant documents."

She made no other comment except to say that a statement would be issued once a day during the negotiations.

On Tuesday, Iraqi chief

negotiator Abdul Amir Al Anbari expressed optimism and that he expected the first round of technical talks to last "seven or ten days."

Iraqi diplomats were to meet with U.N. officials in two separate sessions Wednesday, according to Iraqi sources.

The talks could lead to a partial lifting of trade sanctions against Iraq, which have been in force since Baghdad's invasion of Kuwait in August 1990.

Despite an optimistic tone from Iraq Tuesday, international analysts said they were reserved about the outcome of the discussions.

Mr. Anbari is "telling everyone what they wanted to hear," said one Middle East expert. "If it was that

urgent somebody more important would have come over" and "there would only be one round" of negotiations, he added.

The formula for an oil-for-food deal is contained in U.N. Resolution 986 adopted in April 1995.

Until now, Iraq has refused to implement the resolution claiming that it infringed upon its sovereignty.

The provision enables Baghdad to export one billion dollars worth of oil per quarter — or 700,000 barrels at current prices — in return for food and medicine, under strict international control.

Iraqis have expressed optimism that they would

(Continued on page 7)

Iraqi team due in Syria to discuss Euphrates water

BAGHDAD (Agencies) — An Iraqi government delegation is to travel to Syria this week to discuss their dispute with Turkey over the diversion of water from the Euphrates River, the official news agency INA reported Wednesday.

Abdul Sattar Salman Hussein, who is heading the foreign and irrigation ministry delegation, said the talks opening Saturday would focus on "ways to reach a final agreement fixing the Iraqi, Syrian and Turkish share of the river."

They will also discuss pollution of the Euphrates and Turkish plans to build two new dams on the river, he said.

Old foes Iraq and Syria have put aside their political differences to confront Turkey over its giant water project in southeastern Anatolia known as GAP, which they fear will reduce the flow of

the Euphrates river.

The dispute rose to the fore when Ankara signed a contract with a European consortium in November to build two new dams close to the Syrian border.

Mr. Hussein said Iraq, which had already suffered water losses through the GAP project, objected to the new dams.

He said Iraq and Syria did not want to shut Turkey out of discussions but that their main long meeting was aimed at "closer cooperation" between the two.

Iraq and Syria, which are ruled by rival branches of the Baath Party, broke off diplomatic ties in 1980 when Syria backed Iran at the start of the 1980-1988 Iran-Iraq war.

Ties were further soured when Syria took part in a U.S.-led coalition that drove Iraqi forces out of Kuwait in the 1991 Gulf war.

"The Iraqi team will discuss the subject of polluting waters of the Euphrates River and its causes since it inflicts gravest damage on human life in addition to the damage to agricultural and industrial activity," INA quoted.

Mr. Hussein said Iraq's foreign minister had sent a note to Turkey urging coordination and compliance with international law on the distribution of Euphrates Waters.

Mr. Hussein said the construction of two new dams on the river by Turkey would "aggravate damage" inflicted on Iraq as a result of Turkish irrigation projects.

"It is regrettable to hear from time to time the construction by Turkey of a dam or new project on the Euphrates River without consulting Iraq and Syria," Mr. Hussein said.

(Continued on page 7)

King meets prime minister

HIS MAJESTY King Hussein on Wednesday paid a visit to the Prime Ministry where he met with Prime Minister Abdul Karim Al Kabariti in the presence of His Royal Highness Crown Prince Hassan and Royal Court Chief Awn Khasawneh. King Hussein voiced satisfaction with the government's plans to deal with the various issues of concern to the public. He also passed his directives about a number of questions to the prime minister, who renewed the government's commitment to the implementation of the directives contained in the letter of appointment.



His Majesty King Hussein with Prime Minister Abdul Karim Kabariti during a visit he paid to the Prime Ministry on Wednesday (Photo by Yousef Allan)

Kabariti pledges to promote Parliament's role, better ties

By Sa'eda Kilani
Special to the Jordan Times

AMMAN — Prime Minister Abdul Karim Al Kabariti on Wednesday reaffirmed the government's commitment to respect and promote the role of Parliament and said the executive authority wanted to enhance cooperation with the legislature.

"We will respect Parliament and we will work on reinforcing its role," Mr. Kabariti said. "We do not promise you that we will be able to achieve miracles, but

we will maintain honesty, loyalty, the sense of belonging and respect for the House," he said in his first appearance before the Lower House of Parliament after assuming office as prime minister on Sunday.

"Until the government wins the vote of confidence (it needs from the House), I will personally shoulder the task of following up on all responsibilities and duties that were raised in the letter of designation from His Majesty King Hussein," said Mr. Kabariti.

In the letter of designation, the King called on Mr. Kabariti's government to preserve and consolidate the unity of the nation, to enhance the country's progress towards democracy and responsible freedom and to make a review of the progress in general to achieve a comprehensive qualitative leap in the country's political, economic and social life.

The Lower House is expected to be convened for a vote of confidence session in the government in two weeks after the 'Eid Al Fitr

feast. The vote will be drawn after the government presents its policy statement to the House.

There are 22 deputies who are also ministers in the Cabinet but Mr. Kabariti's government is likely to ensure an easy vote of confidence from the 80-member House, especially in view of the prime minister's promises to introduce radical and swift changes in the human rights situation in the Kingdom, observers said.

(Continued on page 7)

ICRC discloses Bosnia massacres

GENEVA (Agencies) — A senior official of the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) said on Wednesday he was convinced 3,000 Bosnian Muslims rounded up by Serbs at Srebrenica last July had been massacred.

Jean de Courten, ICRC director of operations, said the fate of 5,000 others who tried to flee the eastern enclave into Bosnian government-held territory had to be urgently cleared up.

After interviewing refugees from Srebrenica, the ICRC established a list of 3,000 draft-age men arrested by Bosnian Serbs as the town fell. The list was handed to Bosnian Serb leaders in October but the ICRC has received no reply.

"I would like to say that the Bosnian Serb authorities have a serious responsibility for what happened in Srebrenica and my conviction is that unfortunately these people are no longer alive," Mr. De Courten told a news conference.

"My conviction is based on the number of precise allegations registered, cross-checking of this information and allegations provided, and the fact that we did never meet those persons captured or arrested (during visits) in prisons," he added.

It was the first time any official of the ICRC — known as an ultra-cautious organisation — had stated a conviction that the 3,000 men rounded up by the Serbs in the enclave were dead.

Mr. De Courten, who met Bosnian Serb leader Radovan Karadzic in Pale at the weekend, said the ICRC also established another list of 5,000 missing people who fled Srebrenica and tried to cross frontlines into government-held territory in central Bosnia.

In the Hague, top U.N. war-crimes investigator Richard Goldstone asked the Bosnian government to retain in custody two senior Bosnian Serb soldiers arrested on suspicion of war-crimes.

Political parties oppose one-person, one-vote law

By Sa'eda Kilani
Special to the Jordan Times

AMMAN — Jordanian political parties believe that the one-person, one vote law should be eliminated and a new law based on proportional representation should be promulgated, an opinion poll has found.

The poll carried out by the Al Urdu Al Jadid Research Centre on the 23 political parties in the Kingdom showed that parties, representing the different political trends, prefer a completely different election law than the one person, one vote law that was introduced in 1993.

The study also showed that 86 per cent of the parties want the voting age be reduced from 19 to 18. The same percentage believes that voters should not vote as illiterates if they can write and read.

The poll, whose results

were released at a press conference on Wednesday, revealed that 77 per cent of the parties in the Kingdom are against the allocation of a quota for women to Parliament. The quota specified for minorities in the current law should be eliminated, according to 50 per cent of the parties.

A high majority of the parties, 77 per cent, sees that the Ministry of Interior should not oversee the election procedures. Instead, they believe that another authority should be responsible for the task.

There was no specification put to the questionnaire, but 81 per cent of the parties agreed to the formation of a special court to look into cases filed by citizens contesting the results of the elections.

Fifty-nine per cent of the parties want the number of seats in the Lower House be raised to 100 from 80 and 68

per cent want to preserve the minimum age eligible for candidates at 30 years.

The study was conducted in May 1995. It was aimed at "bringing into light the Jordanian parties' aspirations and expectations of a new election law," said Hani Hourani, the centre's director. "There is a unanimous rejection to the current law."

A draft election law prepared by the previous government was not officially presented to the Lower House for discussion included some of the changes that political parties called for but it was based on the one-person, one vote law. The draft has been shelved.

In consultations with parliamentarians last week before the announcement of the new government, Prime Minister Abdul Karim Kabariti stressed that a new

(Continued on page 7)

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Royal Jordanian The Wings Of Change

هنا نحن الاتصال

Food arrives at last in besieged Kabul

KABUL (AFP) — Several hundred trucks laden with food and fuel arrived in Kabul on Wednesday, providing at least temporary relief to the Afghan capital, where supplies had virtually dried up after a three-week blockade.

Two hundred trucks, carrying heating oil, flour and potatoes, arrived early Wednesday from the eastern highway linking Kabul and Jalalabad with Pakistan, witnesses said.

Kabul Radio, the official radio of President Burhanuddin Rabbani's government, reported that 400 trucks arrived on Tuesday and 300 more were expected.

In Ertezaqi market, where trucks from Pakistan arrive, drivers said that the vital eastern route had been reopened on the orders of Gulbuddin Hekmatyar, leader of the fundamentalist anti-Rabbani group Hezb-e-Islami.

Hezb-e-Islami closed down the highway on Jan. 16 following disagreement on how to share out the levies that are traditionally imposed on trucks and road convoys in Afghanistan.

But humanitarian groups were unsure Wednesday whether the route would be reopened permanently or only to allow through a number of trucks to relieve the capital temporarily. Many trucks had been held up for more than 10 days at Sarobi, east of the capital.

A government spokesman told AFP that Hezb-e-Islami had lifted the roadblocks permanently and that the government was holding talks with Mr. Hekmatyar.

Mr. Rabbani's right-hand man, Ahmad Shah Massoud, hinted last Sunday that contacts or negotiations had taken place, not only with Hezb-e-Islami but with other anti-Rabbani factions as well.

These included Uzbek chief Rashid Dostum, who has been blocking the northern highway out of the capital, shortly after the exit to the Salang tunnel.

However, the Taliban student militia has shown no sign of ending its opposition to Mr. Rabbani.

Taliban artillery pounded government lines in southern and southeastern Kabul for part of the night from hilltops overlooking the south of the city, defence ministry sources said Wednesday.

Sporadic artillery fire could still be heard in central Kabul early Wednesday.

The Taliban holds Mr. Rabbani responsible for the anarchy and civil strife that has gripped the country since the fall of the Communist regime in April 1992.

The reopening of the eastern highway had an immediate impact on food prices.

The cost of firewood fell by 50 per cent on Wednesday, and the price of flour, sugar and cooking oil also declined, but only slightly.

The afghani, the local currency, which had been losing value against the dollar, firmed, but the tendency had begun before the road reopened.

The dollar was changing hands for 6,500 afghamis on Wednesday, compared with 7,500 on Sunday.

British child bride home from Turkey

LONDON (R) — British child bride Sarah Cook, the 15-year-old who married a Turkish waiter she met on holiday, arrived home on Tuesday to a howl of moral outrage and an agonised debate over declining parental authority.

Sarah finally gave in to pressure from the courts, the Foreign Office and her parents to return to Britain, leaving behind a brief but tragic episode which saw her 18-year-old husband charged with rape and bundled into jail.

Britons were appalled by the tale of the teenager from Essex, east of London, who married unemployed waiter Musa Komeagac in an unauthorised Muslim ceremony in Turkey in January after a holiday romance last summer.

But horror turned to bewilderment when Sarah's parents said the marriage had their approval and they were happy with their young daughter moving to a remote Turkish town to begin life as a Muslim housewife.

She has denied newspaper reports that she is already pregnant.

Overweight and insecure in the way of many 13-year-olds, neither child nor yet a woman, Sarah is reported to have complained of being teased at her Essex school.

The arrival in her life of a dark, handsome young foreigner professing undying love must have seemed like a ticket out of adolescent angst and into paradise.

But Sunday Times columnist Lesley White said: "Who except the ignorant or the feckless could celebrate the abandonment of their little princess to strangers, an alien culture and a draconian religion?"

"Sarah's situation is not just scary," it is the waking nightmare of every mother of a teenage girl," White added.

Turkish authorities, embarrassed by international media attention, moved quickly to declare the marriage illegal under national law and to bring charges of rape against Mr. Komeagac for having sex with a minor.

Yet in stark contrast to Britain, the story was seen in Turkey as a tragic "Romeo and Juliet" tale of young love thwarted by the authorities.

Local Turks cheered Sarah in the street and accused Britain of hypocrisy for attacking the marriage, yet condoning under-age casual sex at home by allowing doctors to issue young girls with contraceptive pills.

Sarah was made a ward of court after the story broke — a legal measure intended to protect children — and ordered to return to Britain immediately.

The courts have said, however, they do not intend to take Sarah out of the care of her parents despite criticism that they sacrificed responsibility on the modern altar of the right to happiness.

"Their behaviour demonstrated a complete breakdown of any moral code whatsoever," wrote Observer newspaper columnist Melanie Phillips.

Weather hot in Jordan

A Jordanian woman holds an umbrella to protect her child from the sun at a public park in Amman on Wednesday. The weather has been unusually warm in Jordan as temperatures plummeted across Europe and North America. The highest registered temperature in Amman, according to the weather bureau, was 22 degrees Centigrade. The highest temperature recorded in the port city of Aqaba was 25 degrees (Photo by Ali Jarekji - Reuters)



Palestinians claim their property in W. Jerusalem

OCUPPED JERUSALEM (AP) — Dr. Rajai Dajani hasn't lived in the house where he was born since 1948, when the neighbourhood in West Jerusalem became part of the new Jewish state. But every month he drives past the yellow stone villa, "Just to reassure myself it's still there."

Mr. Dajani is one of more than 1,300 Palestinians who are claiming rights to property in West Jerusalem as Israel and the Palestine Liberation Organisation (PLO) gear up for negotiations on the final status of the city.

The chance of Israel ever recognising the claims is minuscule, but they are likely to become a bargaining chip in talks on a final Israeli-Palestinian settlement, scheduled to start in May.

West Jerusalem has been overwhelmingly Jewish since 1948, when its former Arab residents fled or were forced to leave. The dispute has focused on East Jerusalem, which Palestinians want as capital of their would-be state.

Faisal Hussein, the Palestinian official in charge of Jerusalem affairs, insists the property claims are not just a bargaining chip. "The Israelis are making claims for Jews in East Jerusalem," he said Tuesday at his Orient House headquarters. "If it is possible here, why not there?"

The office of Jerusalem's Israeli mayor, Ehud Olmert, dismissed the claims.

"We have to do everything we can to prevent the activities of those parties who undermine (Israel's) sovereignty over Jerusalem," spokesman Hagai Elias said in a statement.

Under Israeli law, Palestinians returning to their former homes in all-Jewish neighbourhoods. But he suggests the property owners could be compensated — with money, or with other property in other areas.

"We are optimistic," he said. "We will keep this question alive."

The Palestinians cite as a precedent Jewish claims to East Jerusalem, where the city has demanded the return of property that belonged to Jewish owners before 1948.

Mr. Dajani said he doubts the new claims will do any good.

"If the Israelis wanted to give us anything they would have done it 20 years ago," he said. But, "I would at least like to register my right."

"I would like to move back if possible," Mr. Dajani said wistfully, reminiscing about playing in the courtyard of the house where he was born 56 years ago. "If the Israelis would not mind me, I would not mind them."

"But," Mr. Dajani added, "if I move back, then everyone in the neighbourhood would move back — the cousins, and the whole clan — so there would not be Israelis anymore."

The group posted a notice on the Internet Tuesday, and expects to get more than 10,000 claims from Palestinians around the world, Mr. Shkirat said.

Mr. Shkirat said the group plans to create a database of property in West Jerusalem and to set up a committee of legal experts to determine what rights the Palestinians have under Israeli and international law.

Mr. Shkirat acknowledges the unlikelihood of Palestinians returning to their former homes in all-Jewish neighbourhoods. But he suggests the property owners could be compensated — with money, or with other property in other areas.

"We are optimistic," he said. "We will keep this question alive."

Qatari paper assails Kuwait

DOHA (AFP) — A Qatari newspaper made an unprecedented attack on Kuwait on Wednesday, accusing it of preventing any Arab reconciliation and of weakening its Gulf Arab neighbours.

Al Raya newspaper, which reflects the Qatari government's views, wrote: "Through its inflexibility and its opposition to inter-Arab reconciliation, Kuwait is thwarting any coordinated Arab action."

Its attack was prompted by comments last week from Kuwait's information minister, Sheikh Saud Nasser Al Sabah, who said Kuwait preferred a weakened government in Iraq over a new regime and who praised Israel for not retaliating to Iraqi Scud attacks during the 1991 Gulf war.

It is extremely paradoxical that Sheikh Saud talks harshly of Iraq, takes pleasure in the continued suffering of 18 million Iraqis and yet speaks very kindly of Israel," Al Raya wrote.

"Kuwait has lost its sovereignty, and liberty in order to protect its resources and its borders."

Like most Gulf Arab countries Qatar broke off diplomatic ties with Iraq after it invaded Kuwait in August 1990, but has since renewed relations and called for healing Arab rifts.

Sheikh Saud also criticised Qatar for broadcasting interviews with exiled Bahraini opposition leaders in January.

NEWS IN BRIEF

Tunisian opposition leader jailed for 2 years

TUNIS (R) — A court has sentenced Tunisian opposition leader Mohammad Mouda to two years' jail for illegal possession of foreign currency, his lawyers said on Tuesday. Mr. Mouda, president of the main legal opposition party, the Movement of Social Democrats (MDS), was also fined 125,000 dinars (\$130,000) by the court on Friday, they said. Police had found unspecified amounts of dollars in his home last October. The lawyers said they would appeal the sentence. Mr. Mouda is also being tried on charges of having secret ties with Libyan agents. The trial started last Wednesday and will resume on Feb. 24.

4,000-year-old settlement uncovered in Sharjah

SHARJAH (AP) — Archaeologists in this emirate have uncovered remains of a 4,000-year-old settlement, the emirates news daily reported. The settlement is on the slopes of hills overlooking the Arabian Sea port of Khor Fakkan, just outside the entrance to the Gulf, the newspaper reported. Graves, maybe from the same period, were found atop the hills. The Sharjah museum described the find as a large settlement dating to around 2,000 B.C., comprising a number of stone buildings with roofs supported by wooden poles. A number of pot fragments were found, some with painted decorations, as well as grinding stones for tools, the English-language Emirates News said. The presence of these implements suggests the inhabitants probably engaged in farming. Bronze weights also were found, possibly for use in fishing nets.

Pilot in 1985 TWA hijacking dies

KANSAS CITY, Missouri (R) — A former pilot whose composure during a 1985 jet hijacking earned him the respect of millions of Americans died of lung cancer on Tuesday. John Testrake, aged 68, died at a hospice in St. Joseph, Missouri, a spokesman said. Testrake earned national praise in June, 1985, when militiamen hijacked the Trans World Airlines flight he was piloting from Athens to Rome. The plane sat for 17 days in Beirut, Lebanon while authorities negotiated for the release of all 145 passengers and eight crew members. One navy diver was killed during the standoff. Photographs of Testrake, leaning out of a cockpit window while the airline's captors loomed in the background, made newspaper front pages worldwide. After the hijacking, Testrake often gave public lectures, wrote a book, and even ran unsuccessfully for a seat in the Missouri house.

Balabagan being 'humiliated' in weekly canings

PARIS (AFP) — Authorities in the United Arab Emirates (UAE) are spinning out the punishment of 100 lashes for teenage Filipino maid Sarah Balabagan by caning her in "small doses" in humiliating circumstances, French activists campaigning for her release said here. "Corporal punishment is reported to be being administered in small doses — three to four lashes a week — in particularly degrading circumstances," said a communiqué released Tuesday by the campaigners who have called for a demonstration Thursday outside the UAE embassy in Paris. The campaigners backed by the French Socialist Party and the Communist Party appealed to "the French government to intervene to secure the unconditional release of Sarah Balabagan." Sarah was sentenced to death in September for having stabbed to death an employer who had raped her in July 1994. She claimed to have acted in self defence. Amid a tide of international protests, an appeals court commuted the sentence to one year in prison and 100 lashes of the cane after relatives of the dead man accepted \$41,000 in financial compensation collected in the Philippines.

Israeli army top heavy — deputy

TEL AVIV (AFP) — Israel's army has become top heavy with too many generals and colonels at the expense of other ranks, the chairman of a parliamentary watchdog committee warned on Wednesday. The number of brigadiers has increased by 60 per cent in the past 10 years, while major generals have increased by 41 per cent, colonels by 17 per cent, and lieutenant-colonels by 31 per cent, said Hagai Merom, chairman of the defence and foreign affairs committee. During the same period, the number of junior officers and soldiers has been reduced by 15 per cent. "We have to reduce the number of senior officers so as to economise," said Mr. Merom, a deputy from the ruling Labour Party. He called for a reduction in the length of compulsory service, which is currently three years for men and two for women, and said he supported the idea of drafting some recruits into schools and environmental protection. The Israeli army has 177,500 people in its regular forces and 427,000 reservists, according to the Jaffee Centre for Strategic Studies at Tel Aviv University.

Chief rabbin slashes marriage 'black list'

TEL AVIV (AFP) — A controversial secret black list of Israelis barred from marrying for religious reasons has been cut in half, but still affects 2,500 people, the chief rabbi of the country's Sephardic community announced. "This list will be reduced by another 700 to 800 names in the coming months," Chief Rabbi Eliahu Bakshi-Dor, said in a letter sent to parliament and published Wednesday. The existence of the black list of people considered "impure" because their Jewishness was in doubt or because they were illegitimate children was revealed by Israel public radio last year, causing an uproar in the country. The radio said that the list included politicians, entertainers and well-known business figures. In Israel, civil marriages are non-existent and rabbis have full authority over all matters concerning births, weddings, divorces and funerals.

Cairo's poor eat their fill for free during Ramadan

CAIRO (AFP) — In the kitchen of Sheikh Ahmad Siam Ali, rice and tomato soup bubble in immense cooking pots in preparation for the evening's breaking of the daily Ramadan fast.

Meanwhile, dozens of poor wait: the holy month of Ramadan is the one time of year when they eat to their heart's content, without paying a piaster.

Sheikh Ahmad, 55, a respected merchant in the Gamaliya slum of Cairo's ancient Islamic city, brings the bread out to the table himself and waits until his guests finish before starting on his own meal.

"For the past 15 years I have organised food distributions in Ramadan. In the beginning there were only about 20 people who benefited," Mr. Ahmad, a member of the Sufi sect, told AFP.

Now he has a dining room accommodating 120 people which he built along with the kitchen last year in the ground floor of his home.

Its long tables are lined with plates of rice, meat and salads, along with glasses of traditional Ramadan drinks of date juice and licorice.

Not only is the hall full during the daily sunset meal, but Sheikh Ahmad also provides a "takeaway" service to dozens of nearby families, all for free.

"God gave me a profitable business and I use it to help the poor. There are people who help me by providing food," he said.

His family members, neighbours and anyone who "wants to work for God" also helps out, peeling potatoes or washing dishes.

"Giving bread to someone who has none counts more in blessings than building a mosque," he said.

Such "Tables of the Compassionate" offering free food line the streets throughout Cairo during Ramadan.

Guests at the table are usually the poor, but also include anyone caught away from home when the sunset call to prayer marks the end of the day's fast.

For the rich, the tables fulfill the duty of charity. They can also serve as a popular boost for a local politician or good advertising for a restaurant.

One of the largest "Tables of the Compassionate" not far from Sheikh Ahmad's is at the mosque of Al Hussein serves more than 10,000 people a day, according to the English-language Al Ahram weekly.

The sunset "iftar" meal kicks off a night of festivities which lasts until dawn: children throw fireworks, while sellers of beans and dozens of types of sticky sweets make a fortune in sales.

Wealthier celebrants pay up to 50 Egyptian pounds (\$15) for a night in the multi-coloured Ramadan tents, one of the largest of which stands outside the Cairo Opera House.

There they smoke "sheesha" waterpipes and listen to singers and musicians perform before tucking down the "suhur," the final meal before dawn starts another day's fast.

But those who choose to sleep during the night can rely on the "musahharati," a drummer who circulates the streets just before dawn to wake up residents in time for their last chance to eat before the new day.

JORDAN TIMES DAILY GUIDE AND CALENDAR

JORDAN TELEVISION	
Tel: 72111-19	
PROGRAMME TWO	
13:00	Fireman Sam
13:10	Disney's Aladdin (cartoon)
13:30	The Legend of Treasure Islands
14:00	My Secret Identity
14:15	NBA
15:15	The New Leave it to Beaver
15:30	Doc — Adventures of the Old West
16:30	Gillette World Sport Special
17:00	Doc — A La Poursuite D'une Ligne
17:30	Varieties — Le Monde Est A Vous
19:00	News in French
19:15	Magazine — Archimède
19:30	News Headlines
19:35	Cartoon — Magazine III
20:00	Doc — Magazine III
20:15	The Album Show
21:10	Dreams — Pride and Prejudice
22:00	News in English
22:25	Doc — A Journey Across the Land of Islam
22:45	Feature film: "Sharpe's Eagle"
23:59	Series — Matlock
PRAYER TIMES	
05:02	Fajr
06:21	(Sunrise) Dhuhr
11:50	Dhuhr
14:52	"Asr
CHURCHES	
17:19	Maghrib
18:37	Isha
St. Mary of Nazareth Church	
Sveithel, Tel. 811741	
Assemblies of God Church, Tel. 82785	
St. Joseph Church Tel. 62490	
Church of the Annunciation Tel. 637441	
De la Salle Church Tel. 661757	
Terassanta Church Tel. 622366	
Church of the Annunciation Tel. 625541	
Anglican Church Tel. 652626	
Armenian Catholic Church Tel. 771331	
Armenian Orthodox Church Tel. 775261	
St. Ephraim Church Tel. 771751	
Armenian International Church Tel. 652526	
Evangelical Lutheran Church Tel. 624557	
The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints Tel. 654132	
Church of Nazareth Tel. 655691	
The Evangelical Local Church in Amman Tel. 811295	
WEATHER	
Buletin supplied by the Department of Meteorology	
Warm weather conditions will prevail with temperatures remain-	

USEFUL TELEPHONE NUMBERS	
NIGHT DUTY	
AMMAN:	
Dr. Ghaleb Zawalidh	750111
Dr. Fakher Bishara	653412
Dr. Khalil Toubq	757523
Dr. Mahmoud Amir	888883
Dr. Fawzi	661912
Dr. Lutfi	778336
Dr. Al-Sayid	637055
ing above average. Clouds will appear at different altitudes and winds westerly moderate in force.	
On Friday, temperatures are expected to drop with a chance for scattered showers in the northern parts of the Kingdom extending on Saturday in the remaining regions.	
In Aqaba, it will warm and dusty with winds southerly active and seas rough.	
Min./Max. temp.	10/22
Aqaba	15/25
Deserts	6/23
Jordan Valley	14/24
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Aqaba	15/25
Deserts	6/23
Jordan Valley	14/24

HOSPITALS	
AMMAN:	
Hussein Medical Centre	81381/32
Khalid Maqarim, J. Amn	642514
Akileh Maternity, J. Amn	642411/2
Jalal Amman Maternity	642626
Mulha, J. Amman	150140
Palestine, Shmeisani	607071
Shmeisani Hospital	669131
University Hospital	845845
Al-Musharraf Hospital	667274
Queen Alia Hospital	60220/50
Amal Hospital	607155
The Arab Centre for Heart and Special Surgery	865199
ZARQA:	
Zarqa Central Hospital	810432/33
Central Amman Telephone	
Repairs	623111
Abdali Telephone Repairs	661111
Jordan Television	771111
Radio Jordan	771111
Water Authority	661111
Jordan Electricity Authority	815615
Electric Power	
Company	636381
RJ Flight Information	18-53200
Queen Ali Int. Airport	18-53200
FOR THE TRAVELLER	
QUEEN ALIA INTERNATIONAL AIRPORT	
ARRIVALS	
Royal Jordanian (RJ) Flights (Terminal 1)	
04:00	Singapore, Kuala Lumpur (RJ)
07:15	Dhahran (RJ)
08:00	Sanaa, Aqaba (RJ)
09:20	Dhahran, Riyadh (RJ)
09:30	New Delhi (RJ)
10:05	Beirut (RJ)
10:05	Muscat, Dhahran (RJ)
10:20	Columbo (RJ)
15:20	New York (RJ)
16:25	London (RJ)
17:35	Moscow (RJ)
18:30	Jeddah (RJ)
18:35	London, Athens (RJ)
19:10	Bangkok, Cebu (RJ)
Other Flights (Terminal 2)	
06:50	Beirut, London (BA)
07:45	Beirut (ME)
11:30	Ahu Dhabi, Al-Ain, Muscat (GF)
13:30	Algiers (AF)
14:30	Riyadh (SV)
14:40	Istanbul (OT)
16:10	Dubai (EK)
17:15	Dubai (EK)
21:10	Cairo (MS)
02:30	Amsterdam (KL)
DEPARTURES	
Royal Jordanian (RJ) Flights (Terminal 1)	
06:15	Beirut (RJ)
07:15	Moscow (RJ)
11:00	Amsterdam, Chicago (AF)
11:05	Montreal, Toronto (RJ)
11:30	Ahu Dhabi, Al-Ain, Rome (RJ)
12:05	London (RJ)
12:15	Athens, Paris (RJ)
12:20	Tunis (RJ)
13:00	Jeddah (RJ)
13:50	Cairo (MS)
14:00	Ahu Dhabi, Kuala Lumpur (add)
20:45	London (RJ)
21:00	Amsterdam (KL)
21:00	Ahu Dhabi, Jakarta (add) (RJ)
21:00	Cairo (RJ)
21:05	Bahrain, Dhahran (RJ)
22:05	Kuala Lumpur, Jakarta (RJ)
22:30	Jeddah (RJ)

MARKET PRICES	
Upper lower price in fbs per kg.	
Apple	700/500
Banana	620/520
Banana (Mukammur)	550/550
Banana (imported)	250/250
Cabbage	70/40
Corn	180/180
Cauliflower	180/180
Cucumbers (large)	150/100
Cucumbers (small)	250/150
Garlic	100/100
Grape Fruit	250/120
Leemon	400/250
Marrow (large)	130/80
Marrow (small)	230/160
Onion (green)	140/80
Onion (dry)	230/180
Orange	640/520
Pepper (hot)	500/380
Pepper (sweet)	240/160
Potato	160/100
Radish	160/100
String Beans	700/520
Spinach	140/100
Tomato	130/80



Her Majesty Queen Noor Wednesday chairs a meeting of the National Task Force for Children advisory group (photo by Crystal)

Queen, specialists discuss development of National Task Force for Children

AMMAN (J.T.) — Her Majesty Queen Noor Wednesday chaired the second of an ongoing series of meetings of concerned officials and specialists to refine the strategy and organization of the National Task Force for Children (NTFC), a Royal Court statement said.

Queen Noor emphasized that the NTFC will coordinate, collaborate with and bring together existing institutions working in the field of child welfare through the establishment of the National Coalition for Children (NCC), whose membership will be voluntary and will involve registering with the NTFC, the statement said.

The latter, said the statement, will comprise a Policy Group to help the NCC develop national policies for children, a Programme Group to assist in formulating the NCC's strategies, and a secretariat that will be in charge of the NTFC's implementation.

The NTFC, which will monitor the condition and status of children in accordance with the Arab and

Mu'ta University to open civil branch in Ma'an

By Lola Keilani
Special to the Jordan Times

AMMAN — A civil branch of Mu'ta University will open in Ma'an this year, to provide a large number of underprivileged students with the opportunity to study closer to home, according to Abdul Rahman Atiyat, president of the university.

Opening a branch in Ma'an will also allow a majority of girls who were forbidden from studying outside the Ma'an Governorate to work towards a bachelors degree, he said.

Mr. Atiyat said providing this educational opportunity to more people from the governorate will in turn contribute to the development of the area.

"With the new branch, parents, most of whom cannot afford to pay for the higher education of their children, would not have to pay for room, board and transportation," said Mr. Atiyat.

The new branch will be established upon directives issued by His Majesty King Hussein to former Prime Minister HRH Prince Zeid Bin Shaker, and

is expected to start operating in the 1996-1997 academic year.

It will offer education programmes in most of the fields taught at Mu'ta University.

It will also offer a major in Special Basic Education, which according to Mr. Atiyat, is needed in Ma'an and the entire southern part of the Kingdom.

The programme is designed to graduate qualified teachers for the seventh to 10th grades.

Education through the 10th grade is compulsory, and with good education during these crucial years, said Dr. Atiyat, students from the Ma'an Governorate will be better equipped to continue high school, and go on to university.

"Most of the qualified teachers appointed by the Ministry of Education from outside the governorates do not stay for the required periods of time at Ma'an schools," Dr. Atiyat said.

But, he said, with the special basic education programme, graduates from

the university itself, who are also residents of Ma'an, will be able to teach youngsters from their own community and the southern regions, rather than these areas relying on appointments from Amman.

Cost estimates and the number of students to be accepted at the new Mu'ta branch campus during the first academic year have not been calculated yet.

But the university has organized an administrative and architectural committee to draw plans for the new branch.

Both committees visited Ma'an on Wednesday to look at the proposed location and write a report on their findings.

The report will be sent to Prime Minister Abdul Karim Kahariti for approval and government funding.

"We will start small and then, depending on the demand and finances, the branch will expand," Dr. Atiyat said.

Jordan, Japan sign grant agreement for \$10m in waste disposal equipment

AMMAN (Petra) — The government of Japan is giving Jordan a \$10 million grant to improve environmental conditions at the country waste disposal sites by providing disposal and solid waste treatment equipment.

Under an agreement signed in Amman Wednesday by Minister of Municipal and Rural Affairs and the Environment Abdul Razzak TUBEISHAT and the head of a Japanese mission visiting Jordan, Mr. T. Abe,

Japan will provide dump trucks, bulldozers, tractors, and compressors.

Speaking at the signing ceremony, Dr. Tubeishat voiced Jordan's appreciation of the Japanese government's grant and lauded the strong ties between the two countries adding that the aid will greatly help the Kingdom protect the environment from pollution.

Waste disposal is one of the main problems facing Jordan, and the Japanese

aid will be of great benefit to the country, added the minister.

He said the shortage of appropriate equipment for garbage disposal had impeded the ministry's environment protection plans, adding that the Japanese aid will secure 55 types of equipment which will help the ministry overcome the problem.

According to Dr. Tubeishat, the two sides will conclude a final agreement for the grant in April.

and the equipment will not be available in Jordan before the beginning of 1997.

According to a statement after the signing, the ministry had requested the grant from Japan which sent a special mission to Jordan to study the situation.

It said that the Japanese team spent 40 days studying 10 suitable areas to be used as dumping grounds.

CARE launches community enterprise project

AMMAN (J.T.) — In collaboration with local departments of the Ministry of Social Development, the Ministry of Agriculture and the German Agency for Technical Cooperation (GTZ), CARE announced the launching of 10 community enterprise projects to be implemented with 10 local organizations in the watershed of Wadi Ibn Hanmad in Karak.

The announcement was made Monday in a meeting in Rabba with community leaders from the area.

The projects are to complement the ongoing Pilot Watershed Management Project being carried out by the Ministry of Agriculture and GTZ.

Local organizations should submit proposals to CARE through the Qasr office of the Ministry of Social Development in accordance with the project criteria, which include promoting the protection of the watershed, generating income for the local organizations and benefiting the maximum number of poor families.

The first deadline for submitting applications is Feb. 15, and a local selection committee comprising staff from the Watershed Management Project of the Ministry of Agriculture and GTZ, the Ministry of Social Development and CARE, will make recommendations as to which projects to begin working with. The next steps will involve entering into formal partnerships with the local organizations, training of the local organizations and detailed feasibility studies for proposed community enterprises.

DEF, EU to start programme on launching productive projects

AMMAN (Petra) — The Development and Employment Fund (DEF), the Noor al Hussein Foundation (NHF), the General Union of Voluntary Societies (GUVS) and the Agricultural Credit Corporation (ACC).

These loans will be used by local charity societies to help individuals launch income-generating projects.

For its part, QAF will return the loans to individuals while GUVS will give loans to groups working together or societies and will open credit units at 62 charity societies to help deliver the loans.

The NHF will establish 12 credit units in villages where it is implementing quality of life projects while the ACC will give loans to people planning to implement agricultural projects.

Mr. Qubba'a said the

agreement on providing the aid which was signed last year provides for the loans to be given over a period of three years, mainly to less-fortunate groups living in rural regions.

Voicing appreciation of the EU, Mr. Qubba'a said that the aid was part of European assistance to Jordan to enable it carry out the economic reform programme.

He urged people wishing to receive loans to start income-generating projects in sectors such as agriculture, industry and services to call at the fund offices to apply for them.

Speaking at the signing ceremony, Mr. Gazzo said that the EU will continue to help Jordan in the course of its support for the peace process to enable the Jordanian people to raise their living standards.

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Amman Municipality opens pedestrian tunnel in Marka district in E. Amman

AMMAN (Petra) — The Amman Municipality Wednesday inaugurated a 30-metre long pedestrian tunnel under a main highway in Marka area in eastern Amman and said that the project was expected to reduce road accidents in the heavy traffic road.

Amman Mayor Mamdouh Abbadi who presided over the inauguration ceremony said that the tunnel was built following numerous accidents in which many children crossing the street were killed or injured.

According to engineer Imad Omeish, director of the municipality's projects, the tunnel which took three weeks to finish, was part of an overall plan to build pedestrian and vehicle tunnels to reduce road congestions and reduce the number of accidents. Mr. Omeish said the new tunnel was in an area inhabited by 30,000 citizens.

He said that the tunnel which was built under the ring

road in Marka district is three metres high and five metres wide.

He said that the municipality has prepared a programme for building several tunnels for cars and pedestrians, including one at the Fifth Circle of Jabal Amman under a road leading to Abdoun district.

Early next month the Amman Municipality will start digging a 65-metre-long tunnel under the Fifth Circle interchange, according to a municipality official who said that the two lane tunnel will cost JD 700,000.

WHAT'S GOING ON

CONCERT AND PLAYS

- * Musical performance by Jalal Al Wandi at the Phoenix Gallery, Gardens Street on Thursday at 8:30 p.m. Also showing a special performance of play, "Ramadan Supermarket," on Friday at 8:30 p.m. (Tel. 695291).
- * "Ramadan Supermarket" (in Arabic) at the Royal Cultural Centre on Thursday at 8:00 p.m.

FILM

- * "Bird" at the American Centre on Thursday at 2:00 p.m.

MAFRAQ CULTURAL DAY

- * Cultural day by Mafraq Cultural Directorate on Thursday at the Royal Cultural Centre (including a concert at 9:00 p.m., poetry at 8:00 p.m., and a book-art exhibition all day long).

EXHIBITIONS

- * Engravings by French artists at the French Cultural Centre (until Feb. 29).
- * Paintmaking and paintings by Jordanian artist Yasser Dweik at Darat Al Funun, Jabal Luweibdeh. Also displaying paintings and sculptures by contemporary artists (until Feb. 18).

By Lola Keilani
Special to the Jordan Times

AMMAN — Nine-year-old Rula is a victim of sexual abuse, indifferent parents, self-righteous educators, and a faulty legal system, according to her social worker.

What is perhaps more disarming says the lawyer and social worker who asked not to be identified is that unless the Penal Code is amended, Rula will neither be the first nor the last child to fall victim to sexual abuse.

When the social worker accompanied Rula to report the incidents to the authorities, the police could not help, said the social worker.

According to the Penal Code, only the victim has the right to file a complaint. But if the victim is a minor, he or she should be accompanied by a parent to the police station, otherwise the complaint will not be accepted.

Lawyer and human rights activist Asma Khader told the Jordan Times that although the law states that a citizen will be prosecuted, if he/she is witness to or aware of a crime or a felony and does not report

Child sexual abuse: Why so little can be done

to the authorities, in the case of child abuse the law has little effect.

The social worker said that she tried to convince Rula's family to file a formal complaint, but she was surprised when "the girls' parents reacted with total indifference to the situation."

In fact, says social worker, Rula's abuser, who used to give Rula 15 piasters every day, now visits Rula's home, and often brings gifts to the family.

Ms. Khader asked, in cases such as these, "If the parents are the source of abuse, how can anyone complain?"

She said that legal centres, school counsellors, and even relatives have no right to file an official complaint if they have knowledge of a case child abuse.

Ms. Khader said the law should be changed so that any person aware of such abuse can report it to the

police and so that police have right to investigate reported cases.

The social worker told the Jordan Times that when she suspected that Rula was being molested she went to the girl's school to talk to her. The meeting took place in the presence of the headmistress, the social worker said.

When the headmistress heard Rula recount in graphic details the encounters with the elderly man, she threw Rula against the wall and insulted her. Rula was soon expelled from school by the headmistress, said the social worker.

"I feel frustrated because I cannot help the girl especially that the environment the girl is living in could lead her to prostitution," she said.

Rula, and her eldest sister who suffered the same fate at the hands of the same abuser, according to the

social worker are now both out of school, and their family refused to register them in another school.

A school counsellor in Amman's second district told the Jordan Times of a case of an 11-year-old girl from an underprivileged family who used to come to school with JD 15 in her pocket daily.

After investigation and meeting the child's family, the counsellor said she found that the adolescent was involved in prostitution.

"I can only inform the child's family; beyond that I have no authority," the counsellor complained, adding that she believed that the girl's family "does not care."

According to the counsellor, who also asked not to be identified, the girl was still coming to school carrying the same amount of money, each day.

There are no exact figures

on child sexual abuse in Jordan. But according to the United Nations Children Fund State of the Jordanian Child report released 1993, "the problem is thought to have increased in view of the additional social and economic problems."

A study on child abuse conducted by sociologist Sabri Rubeihat shows that most cases of child abuse are not reported to the authorities, and therefore, any available statistics do not reflect the actual reality.

In his study, Dr. Rubeihat found that most of the cases take place in overpopulated areas, where the number of family members is large with little room in the house forcing the children to play in the street. "This makes them easy prey," the study said.

Ms. Khader said that child sexual abuse is common in Jordan, and "every school counsellor encounters these cases."

Because the victim of sexual abuse is often condemned by society and because the victim's family usually holds him/her responsible, the majority of children usually confide in an individual they feel comfortable with, such as their school counsellor she said. But these counsellors have no authority beyond the school walls, she added.

"Children could be helped by establishing a court specialised in children's affairs," she said. The court would base its decisions on the Child's Rights Law, which is currently being drafted by the Ministry of Social Development, Ms. Khader said.

But according to Ms. Khader the draft law, which serves to protect children, makes no mention of sexual abuse as it is still a societal to speak of such anti-social behaviour in public.

The court will be a huge step in the right direction, Ms. Khader said, provided that it is funded by the government and taken seriously, she added.

U.K., Ireland try to clear the air

DUBLIN (R) — British and Irish government ministers Wednesday attempted to patch up their differences over the deadlocked Northern Ireland peace process which has become entangled in an ugly row between Dublin and Belfast. Irish Deputy Premier Dick Spring met Britain's Northern Ireland minister to resume talks which were broken off inconclusively earlier this month in a dispute over Britain's plans to call Northern Ireland elections.

Mr. Spring was expected to tell Sir Patrick Mayhew, Britain's top Northern Ireland official, that a stand-off between Dublin and Northern Ireland's powerful Protestant Unionists risks poisoning years of Anglo-Irish work on a viable peace.

Mr. Spring was also expected to tell Sir Patrick that Dublin expects Britain to honour a pledge to try to convene all-party talks on a

lasting settlement by the end of the month.

The joint search to settle a conflict which killed 3,200 in 25 years has ground to a halt and has become overshadowed by the row between Mr. Spring and David Trimble, leader of Northern Ireland's Ulster Unionist Party (UUP).

Mr. Trimble, whose party wants Northern Ireland to remain forever British, bluntly rejected an invitation to talks with Mr. Spring and has even declined to answer a series of telephone calls from him in recent days, Irish officials said.

Mr. Trimble told Belfast reporters Tuesday he had no intention of talking to Mr. Spring before the end of the month and accused him of trying to meddle in Northern Ireland's affairs.

He was unrepentant Wednesday. "There is a very important constitutional principle here which we are anxious to protect, namely that we won't dis-

cuss the internal affairs of our part of the United Kingdom with a foreign government," he told the BBC.

The row goes to the heart of Anglo-Irish attempts to work together to find a solution to one of Europe's oldest and bloodiest conflicts and threatens to reopen deep old wounds.

Under a 1985 agreement London and Dublin are jointly involved in a quest for a negotiated settlement which led to twin guerrilla ceasefires in 1994 and won international backing, notably from U.S. President Bill Clinton.

Unionist leaders fear Dublin's involvement in the peace process masks a plan to reunite Northern Ireland and Ireland. This union is the goal of Irish Republican Army (IRA) guerrillas and their political wing, Sinn Fein.

British Prime Minister John Major stunned his Irish partners last month by

sidestepping a joint pledge to try to hold new talks on Northern Ireland and announcing elections to a consultative body instead.

Mr. Major argued that the Unionists, whose support he might need to defend his embattled Conservative government, would never negotiate with Sinn Fein so long as its IRA guerrilla supporters refused to surrender their weapons.

Mr. Major and Sir Patrick say elections to a new body will give Sinn Fein the chance to prove its commitment to democratic and peaceful politics and pave the way for all-party talks when the IRA finally hands over its arms stockpile.

The IRA, founded seven decades ago to end British rule in Ireland, says such demands are ludicrous but has maintained a 17-month-old ceasefire called to try to get Sinn Fein involved in negotiations on a lasting settlement.

New Italian cabinet looks elusive as parties bicker over reform

ROME (AFP) — Italy's Prime Minister-designate Antonio Di Pietro called a one-day pause Wednesday in consultations on forming a new government as bickering continued to rage among parties over constitutional reform.

Mr. Di Pietro, who is seeking to form a government charged with establishing the political stability that has eluded Italy in 54 previous post-war governments, intends to draft a compromise proposal during the day to try and break the deadlock which has once again revived the spectre of early elections.

His consultations are being held up by disagreement between Gianfranco Fini, head of the post-fascist National Alliance, and left-wing leader Massimo D'Alema.

Mr. Di Pietro, who had earlier hoped to submit his new cabinet to President Oscar Luigi Scalfaro by the end of this week, said he was "moderately optimistic" on his chances of success. The deadline for the formation of a new cabinet has been pushed forward to early next week.

Leaders of left and right had reached a tentative agreement on changing the constitution in line with Mr. Di Pietro's proposals. His programme aims to strengthen the powers of the head of state in a modified version of the French system, giving a directly-elected president the power to form a government from a parliamentary majority.

But Mr. Fini and Mr. D'Alema, whose Democratic Party of the Left is the biggest force in a leftist alliance, are having difficulty generating support amongst allies or supporters for an unprecedented alliance between the left and right, needed to push through the constitutional reforms.

Speaking on Italian television Tuesday night, they both warned that early elections would be preferable to any major compromise.

U.S. 'cannot support' South East Asia nuclear free zone

KUALA LUMPUR (R) — The United States is unable to support a South East Asia nuclear weapons free zone in part because it would inhibit freedom of the seas, Washington's chief arms negotiator said Wednesday.

The Association of South East Asian Nations (ASEAN) agreed to establish the zone, similar to one declared in the South Pacific, at a summit in Bangkok in December.

Washington has expressed reservations about a separate protocol to the treaty that it says impinges on its rights under the freedom of the seas principle.

"The United States is not prepared to sign the protocol because we still have some problems with the language," said Thomas Graham, President Bill Clinton's special representative for arms control, non-proliferation and disarmament.

"The United States very much wants to be associated with the ASEAN nuclear weapons free zone and is confident of working out the problem," he told a news conference.

The zone envisages a region free of nuclear weapons and weapon-related activity.

Mr. Graham said the right of passage through the zone by U.S. ships was an important part of the freedom of the seas issue. He said other legal issues were involved.

Washington and other nuclear powers have objected to the fact that the zone includes exclusive economic zones and continental shelves within its coverage.

ASEAN groups Brunei, Indonesia, Malaysia, the Philippines, Singapore, Thailand and Vietnam. Together they straddle strategic sea lanes linking the Indian and Pacific Oceans.

Mr. Graham said Washington and the other four nuclear powers — France, Britain, China and Russia — are ready to sign a South Pacific nuclear weapons free zone and could do so in the next couple of months.

The South Pacific zone has been held up by French nuclear tests in that region.

Mr. Graham was in Malaysia to canvass support for the Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty (CTBT) negotiations that began in Geneva on Jan. 22.

The five nuclear powers, including China, have publicly expressed support for the treaty. France's decision to end

its nuclear tests in the South Pacific also clears the way.

But China, which continues to conduct underground testing, has held out for a provision allowing "peaceful" nuclear explosions to continue under the treaty.

The United States adamantly opposes it. "There is no difference between conducting nuclear weapons testing for peaceful purposes and detonating a nuclear bomb," Mr. Graham said.

India has been vocal about linking a test ban treaty with disarmament by the nuclear powers. But Mr. Graham said New Delhi may be persuaded to delink the issues.

"The problem with linking the CTBT with disarmament is that a CTBT is hard enough to achieve on its own," he said noting that negotiations for such a treaty have been held since the 1950s.

Linking it with other issues could bog down negotiations so much that a draft treaty could not be ready for ratification at the U.N. General Assembly next September as scheduled, he said.

If the treaty is not done this year then the consensus and momentum behind it could start to unravel, he added.

"It is now or never to achieve this long-sought goal," he said.

Britain, China report progress on Hong Kong issues

HONG KONG (AFP) — British and Chinese officials said Tuesday that progress was made towards settling outstanding issues ahead of the territory's handover to China next year.

Zhao Jihua, head of the Chinese side, and his British counterparts, told reporters after the second day of a four-day meeting of the Sino-British Joint Liaison Group (JLG) that "progress has been made," but provided no details.

But, despite the optimism, some differences remained over the definition of a permanent Hong Kong resident after the 1997 handover, and on the granting of licences for personal communication systems.

Mr. Zhao told reporters that the "right of abode is a matter of Chinese sovereignty," adding that Beijing would still consult Britain on the issue.

Said his British counterpart Hugh Davies: "It is not a question of concession.... It (China) is still making up its mind." The matter will come up for discussion soon, he said.

Meanwhile, differences were also reported on Hong Kong's plan to grant six licences for personal communication systems.

China has insisted that the number of licences be reduced to four, and the senior Chinese official in charge of Hong Kong, Chen Zuo'er, earlier questioned if Hong Kong, with a population of six million, needed six mobile phone operators.

Hong Kong economic services secretary Gordon Siu, however, said Wednesday that the government would push for six Personal Communications Services (PCS) licences to be issued in the territory.

He told reporters that based on a 1994-1995 study, "there is demand for six PCS licences," adding that when the government first opened the tender for PCS licences, it received bids from about 14 companies.

The JLG is also expected to discuss key issues such as the long-running dispute over Hong Kong's much-needed new CT9 container terminal, and air service agreements.

China has objected to Jardine Matheson Ltd.'s involvement in the construction of CT9, alleging that governor Chris Patten granted the Jardine-led consortium the rights to develop part of CT9 in 1992 in return for the trading conglomerate's support for his democratic reforms.

Sino-British relations now-dived three years ago following Patten's decision to push ahead with political reforms.



Pope John Paul II is greeted by a small child that sneaked past security as he approached the altar at the Valle Maria mass site in the town of Esquipulas, some 200 kilometres southwest of Guatemala City. The Pope is on a seven-day tour through Central America and Venezuela (Reuters photo)

Nicaragua bomb attack mars Pope John Paul's visit for peace

MANAGUA (R) — Pope John Paul returns Wednesday to Nicaragua to praise its peaceful transition from Sandinista revolution to democratic rule but a bomb attack against a Catholic Church mars his visit for peace.

The explosion Tuesday on the eve of the Pope's visit, blew a hole in the floor of a small church in the town of Masaya, 30 kilometres southeast of the capital Managua.

No one was hurt but the attack, the 18th church bombing in the past year, was a stark reminder of the hatred still smouldering in Nicaragua after the country became a cold war flashpoint in the last decade.

Security was tight ahead of the Pontiff's arrival, with main streets blocked off a day early by gun-toting soldiers and police. More than 5,000 troops and detectives were deployed to protect Pope John Paul.

On the Pope's previous visit here in 1983, military Commandante Daniel Ortega met him in battle fatigues but his host this time will be a matronly Catholic leader, President Violeta Chamorro.

"Now my dreams are going to become reality in a few hours," Mrs. Chamorro told reporters before Pope John Paul arrived. "I asked (the Pope) that on his last trip to Central America he should please return to Nicaragua."

The 75-year-old Pontiff is making his 69th foreign trip and has at times recently looked frail and tired.

Vatican spokesman Joaquin Navarro-Valls was forced Tuesday to issue a denial that the Pope was in poor health after an international news agency reported that the Pontiff had cut short a pilgrimage to the Guatemalan town of Esquipulas because of ill health.

Cardinal Navarro-Valls said it was bad weather rather than any ailment which forced the Pope to return early to

Guatemala City by helicopter and abandon plans to bless a 400-year-old icon venerated by Catholics as a source of miracle cures.

Later in the day, the Pontiff braved strong, chilly winds at a military parade ground to lead an emotional prayer service honouring Catholic victims of a brutal civil war.

"I want to pay a warm and deserved homage to the hundreds of religious teachers, who along with some priests, risked their lives, and in some cases sacrificed their lives, to spread the word of God," Pope John Paul said.

The president of Guatemala's bishops' conference, Bishop Jorge Mario Avila Del Aguila, gave the Pope a list of the names of around 300 priests and religious teachers killed in Guatemala's civil war. They were among 140,000 people killed in the last three decades.

Most of the victims were murdered by the army in the early 1980s during the rule of Protestant Evangelical dictator General Efraim Rios Montt, who suspected they were guerrilla sympathisers.

But memories of brutal repression did not eclipse the joy of thousands of Guatemalans who braved the cold to cheer the Pontiff.

In his liturgy, the Pope called on religious teachers to adopt the example of Catholic victims of repression and spread the word of God throughout Guatemala to counter the influence of Protestant sects in remote areas populated mainly by Maya Indians.

He said that Mayas were the people most affected by the Protestant sects, which "sow confusion and uncertainty among Catholics," a quarter of Guatemalans have deserted the Catholic Church over the past three decades to join Protestant Evangelical churches.

Following his visit to Nicaragua, the Pope will make a day trip Thursday to El Salvador before continuing Friday to the final stage of his journey in Venezuela.

Australian Labour party scraps plans for TV debates

SYDNEY (AFP) — Australia's ruling Labour Party Wednesday scrapped plans for televised debates between Prime Minister Paul Keating and his rival John Howard, and called for fresh negotiations on the talks.

"If we are to proceed with a debate new arrangements will have to be finalised," a top Labour Party official said.

The televised debates are seen as central to both the government and opposition coalition of the Liberal and National parties ahead of the March 2 general elections, as encounters before the 1990 and 1993 elections had a big role in the outcome, political analysts noted.

"Debates between Keating and Howard can be very important for the outcome of this election," said Elaine Thompson, an associate professor in the School of Political Science at the University of New South Wales.

"These debates can be important in marginal seats where it is really, really tough, particularly as voting decisions are so soft these days with people making up their minds later and later," she added.

The Labour Party has been trailing the conservative coalition by around seven points in opinion polls over the past month and analysts

said Mr. Keating needs a debate victory to turn his campaign around. But plans for two verbal duels collapsed when both sides failed to agree on the host broadcaster or the moderator.

Mr. Keating insisted that the national broadcaster, the Australian Broadcasting Corporation (ABC), host the debates, the first Sunday and the second on Feb. 25.

But Mr. Howard vetoed the ABC's top current affairs broadcaster Kerry O'Brien as moderator of the two proposed debates, saying Mr. O'Brien's actions when he hosted the 1993 election debate were "not defensible."

Mr. Howard instead wants Ray Martin, star anchor man for the commercial Channel Nine, to host the debate.

On Wednesday, Labour's National Secretary, Gary Gray wrote to Liberal Party's Federal Director Andrew Robb telling him that arrangements for two debates had been dropped as a result of the Liberal stance on Mr. O'Brien.

"As far as I'm concerned all terms agreed previously between us are now broken," Mr. Gray wrote.

But Mr. Robb said his party's offer stands. "Mr. Howard stands ready to debate Mr. Keating Sunday night on the Nine Network,"

he said. The ABC has also insisted that if it were to host the debates, it should choose the moderator.

"The purpose of the debates is to provide fair and balanced discussions between the two political leaders and to allow the people of Australia to properly assess the major policy positions," said ABC Managing Director Barry Johns in letters last week to the Labour and Liberal parties.

In the 1993 election, the two debates on the ABC between Mr. Keating and then Liberal leader John Hewson were relatively tame affairs.

There was a third debate, arranged rather hurriedly, on Channel Nine.

And it was razor sharp attacks by Mr. Keating on Mr. Hewson's planned goods and services tax during this clash which helped Labour pull off a surprise win, analysts said.

Back in 1990, about eight million people watched then Prime Minister Bob Hawke outperform the then coalition leader Andrew Peacock in a televised debate which historians see as acting to restore Mr. Hawke's self-confidence on the hustings and help to ensure his re-election.

China bombs Yellow River to break ice

BEIJING (R) — Chinese People's Liberation Army airplanes have dropped bombs to blast apart a blanket of ice blocking the Yellow River in northwest Shaanxi province, the Xinhua News Agency said. The blockage along the river had forced the river to breach its banks, flooding nearly 13,000 hectares (32,000 acres) of farmland and affecting the lives of 13,000 people since the end of last month, it said. The local military base sent 31 airplanes and dropped 576 bombs to break up the ice, bringing the water level down by 1.5 metres, it said.

Mandela is world president — Stevie Wonder

PRETORIA (R) — Blind American singer Stevie Wonder said South African President Nelson Mandela was the world's president. Mr. Mandela, 77, hugged him and said the singer was like a son. "He is the president of the new South Africa, but really he is the president of the world," the singer said after Mr. Mandela led him into the garden of his official residence in Pretoria. Mr. Mandela, holding onto Wonder's arm while talking to reporters, said: "Stevie Wonder is my son, and I speak to him with great affection."

Joan Collins battles lawsuit in court

NEW YORK (R) — British Actress Joan Collins made her debut in a New York courtroom, battling publishing giant Random House over a multi-million-dollar book contract. Random House is suing Collins, demanding the return of a \$1.2 million advance paid to her for manuscripts it claims were unfinished and unpublished. Collins has countered for \$3.6 million she claims the publishing house still owes her. "I am confident of winning," Collins, 62, said outside the Manhattan courthouse.

Jackson's Rio slum video given all-clear

RIO DE JANEIRO (R) — A judge has paved the way for Michael Jackson to film a video in a Rio shantytown, a day after effectively banning the controversial shoot, a lawyer for the production team said. But there was a possibility Jackson and film director Spike Lee might abandon plans to film in the hillside slum. "There's no guarantee the filming will now take place," lawyer Morris Israel said. A battle over Jackson's proposed video for the song They Don't Care About Us erupted when a Rio official said the use of a shantytown as a backdrop could "devalue" attempts to host the 2004 Olympics.

Picasso, Pissarro works stolen from airport

NEW YORK (R) — Three works of art believed to be worth \$15 million, including a painting and a drawing by Pablo Picasso, were stolen from a baggage holding area at John F. Kennedy International Airport, officials said. A lawyer for Mexican businessman Avelino Espinosa said that when his client declared the art to U.S. customs officials, he was told it was too valuable to bring into the country. "When he returned to Mexico with a customs broker, they had a customs broker there, and the paintings were missing," said attorney Kevin Dyer. "It was apparently logged in at a warehouse there by a lone security guard."

China bomb
Yellow River
break ice

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A submarine emerges from the sea while a helicopter hovers over it during a military exercise by Taiwan off its eastern coast of Hualien. The Defence Ministry said the exercise was merely routine and was not related to the recent tensions between Taiwan and China (Reuters photo)

Taiwan ruling Nationalist Party parliament majority cut to one

TAIPEI (R) — Taiwan's ruling Nationalist Party had its razor-thin parliamentary majority slashed to a bare minimum Wednesday when it lost two of its legislators to independent ranks.

The party now holds only 83 of the 164 seats in the parliament after it expelled Tsai Chung-Han and suspended Wang Peilin. The two subsequently announced they would become independent legislators.

A Nationalist official said Mr. Tsai and Mr. Peilin, both from Taiwan's aborigine non-Chinese minority, were punished for voting against the ruling party during parliament's speaker and vice-speaker elections last Thursday.

"The Central Standing Committee has decided to throw Tsai out of the party and suspend Peilin for a year because of their unwillingness to comply with the party's wishes during the elections," the official said by telephone.

The action follows parliamentary elections in December last year in which the Nationalists, who have ruled Taiwan for 54 years, won only 85 seats in parliament, down from a previous 93.

Poll brings relief for Britain's Blair after bruising row

LONDON (R) — British opposition leader Tony Blair heaved a sigh of relief Wednesday after an opinion poll showed that the most bruising row in his Labour Party since he took over as leader 19 months ago had caused little damage.

The poll in the Guardian newspaper, the first since last month's spat over the education of a Labour "shadow" minister's 11-year-old son, showed the party would win 47 per cent of the vote in a general election, down just one point from January.

On figures adjusted to take account of Britons' reluctance to tell pollsters they plan to vote Conservative, the ruling party was given 31 per cent of the vote with the minority Liberal Democrats on 19 per cent.

The Conservative rating was up five points from the equivalent ICM poll in January, but this merely marked a recovery to levels late last year. The January dip followed the defection of a Conservative MP to the Liberal Democrats.

"It's an encouraging sign, but no more than that," said one Conservative strategist. "We are under no illusion about the hill we have to climb."

The poll was the first since revelations that Labour's health spokeswoman Harriet Harman had decided to send her son Joe to a grammar school which selects pupils on academic merit rather than one of the comprehensive schools which Labour favours.

That provoked heavy criticism from party left-wingers, already worried by Mr. Blair's rejection of traditional socialist beliefs such as nationalisation.

But the poll showed 50 per cent of people sided with Ms. Harman in her decision on Joe's schooling against 38 per cent saying she was wrong. Labour supporters were even more heavily in favour.

Prime Minister John Major must call a general election by May next year, and could be forced into an earlier one if he loses his majority in parliament, currently a perilous four.

Mr. Blair was expected to reveal more of his new centrist agenda Wednesday by detailing plans to change Britain's ancient constitutional arrangements by introducing parliamentarians for Scotland and Wales and ending seats for the aristocracy in the upper house of Lords.

"Power to the people is not a slogan but a necessity," he wrote in a newspaper article previewing a speech due to be delivered later Wednesday.

Lesotho's Letsie is sworn in as new king

MASERU (R) — Lesotho's King Letsie was sworn in as monarch of the southern African nation Wednesday to succeed his father who died in a car crash last month.

King Letsie, 32, took the oath of office before his mother, Queen Mamohato, and Lesotho's Prime Minister Ntsu Mokhehle during a solemn public ceremony at the royal palace in the capital Maseru.

He succeeds the late King Moshoeshoe II who was killed in a crash when his car veered off a mountain road on Jan. 15 while he was on his way to visit one of his cattle farms.

King Letsie has already been king, replacing his father at one stage for five years before being forced in turn to abdicate last year under pressure from regional states in a move to ensure stability in the kingdom of 1.6 million people following a constitutional crisis.

As he took the oath administered by Chief Justice Joseph Kholea, the king undertook to "abstain from involving the monarchy in any way in politics or with any political parties or groups."

King Letsie, wearing a suit with a black mourning cloth draped around his neck, embraced his mother after he was sworn in, and shook hands with Mr. Mokhehle.

During his previous reign, King Letsie experienced a turbulent period in the political history of Lesotho.

He was installed as king by the country's then military rulers in 1990 and witnessed the country's first democratic elections in two decades that brought Mr. Mokhehle and his Basuto-led Congress Party to power in March 1993.

In August 1994, King Letsie sparked a constitutional crisis by sacking Mr. Mokhehle in a palace coup.

Hard freeze thaws in U.S. south but crops damaged

ATLANTA (R) — The deep south thawed out Tuesday after an Arctic blast of winter that left tens of thousands of homeowners without power, burst water pipes and did millions of dollars in damage to winter vegetable crops.

In the Midwest, the thaw following a hard freeze brought a threat of flooding rivers and damage to dormant winter wheat crops, while in Canada a band of "Street Angels" set out to save the homeless from the cold and officials scrambled to rescue deer threatened with starvation.

The sun shone and temperatures rose above freezing in northern Georgia for the first time in days, but not before old man winter took a parting shot at a rural water tank north of Atlanta. The cold ruptured a valve, sending water cascading onto trees and severing water service to scores of families.

Georgia agriculture officials warned that the cold had hurt winter crops such as a \$40-million-a-year vidalia onion crop but the extent of damage will not be known for days.

The record blast of Arctic air in the deep south caused severe crop damage in parts of Florida, but predictions that damage might rival that of the catastrophic Christmas 1989 freeze were unreal, officials said.

"This is a very minor freeze compared to the December 1989 freeze," said Florida Department of Agriculture spokesman Bob Blankenship.

Temperatures plunged into the mid-teens in northern Florida and the mid-20s in citrus-growing areas of central Florida Monday, turning orange juice to slush inside the fruit and ruining some winter vegetables.

Preliminary estimates of damage to vegetable crops ranged from \$50 million to \$60 million, said Mr. Blankenship. That figure included only damage to mature crops, not to plants or trees.

The tomato, bell pepper and strawberry crops were hardest hit, and about 5,000 acres of squash and cucumbers in western Florida were largely destroyed, said Mr. Blankenship.

Years ago, when Florida produced virtually all of the nation's winter vegetables, severe freeze damage would have sent consumer prices skyrocketing. But with Mexico now supplying more than 50 per cent of the market, the effects will not be felt as dramatically, said Mr. Blankenship.

"Normally we'd think the prices would jump somewhere in the 15-20 per cent range," he said. "But things aren't really normal because of the abundant supply coming in from Mexico."

Thousands of North Carolina residents remained without electricity Tuesday following a weekend storm that coated tree limbs with ice, bringing down branches and power lines. Cable worker Jeff Vanasek, 24, was killed Monday when he accidentally touched a downed power line carrying 7,200 volts, the Charlotte Observer reported.

In the Midwest, above-freezing temperatures were forecast for coming days but the thaw created a host of new problems. Frozen pipes burst as residents used hair dryers and space heaters to get water flowing. Fremont, Nebraska residents were warned as the ice-cold Platte River threatened to flood.

Wheat farmers and ranchers across the region toiled up stock to crops and livestock from two weeks of

Nearly 20 hurt in Bangladesh police action during Khaleda's visit

DHAKA (R) — Nearly 20 people were injured when police dispersed hundreds of opposition activists trying to disrupt an election rally by Prime Minister Begum Khaleda Zia in southern Bangladesh Wednesday, witnesses said.

They said violence erupted shortly before Mrs. Khaleda spoke to thousands of followers at Mohipal on her way to the town of Feni, which was virtually closed down by an opposition-led strike.

Mrs. Khaleda's Bangladesh Nationalist Party is the only major party taking part in the poll because of a boycott by opposition parties.

The activists exploded home-made bombs and stoned security officials. Police then beat and drove away the protesters.

Officials said Mrs. Khaleda was due to address a number of rallies before she entered strike-bound Feni — a seat she is contesting in the Feb. 15 elections — later Wednesday.

Under Bangladesh's constitution, a candidate can run in up to five seats but if victorious, they can keep only one and must vacate the others.

Witnesses said police, paramilitary and army soldiers had imposed strong security in the town after opposition parties called the strike there to foil Mrs. Khaleda's visit. The strike shut transport, offices and busi-

Two North American Polar Bears find their drinking pool frozen as they exit their icy cave at the Buffalo, New York Zoo

The eight-year-old Polar Bears don't seem to feel the pinch of sub-zero temperatures that has hit the North. Zoo keepers have had to supply special watering areas due to severe cold (Reuters photo)

Two North American Polar Bears find their drinking pool frozen as they exit their icy cave at the Buffalo, New York Zoo. The eight-year-old Polar Bears don't seem to feel the pinch of sub-zero temperatures that has hit the North. Zoo keepers have had to supply special watering areas due to severe cold (Reuters photo)

Taiwan: No fight with China

TAIPEI (R) — President Lee Teng-hui said Wednesday that Taiwan was not going to fight rival China, and Taipei said it had no information to support a report that Beijing is about to start war games near this island.

Mr. Lee's voice hooped and his finger stabbed the air as he denied Beijing's allegations that he wants Taiwan to formally break away from China. Earlier, he also accused Beijing of "standing the truth on its head."

"We are not going to fight with China and we are not trying to compete with China on who has more money, who has more ability and who has bigger fists," Mr. Lee told a rally in his campaign for the country's first direct presidential elections on March 23.

"I am not trying to emphasize so-called Taiwan independence," Mr. Lee added.

China, which regards Taiwan as a renegade province, accused Mr. Lee Tuesday of paying only lip-service to a stated goal of reunification and of secretly aiming for independence. Beijing says it will attack to prevent Taiwan's independence.

But while Mr. Lee denied a goal to break away, he also made it clear that Taiwan has evolved into a separate entity since it split from the mainland after a civil war which ended in 1949.

"The mainland side says Taiwan is a province of the People's Republic of China. But they are just telling themselves that," Mr. Lee said.

"Chinese Communists have not ruled Taiwan for one hour, one minute. They have not collected a single cent of tax here and yet they still dare to shout 'you're mine, you're mine,'" added the president, favourite to win the March elections.

As Mr. Lee railed, officials denied a report by the Hong Kong Ming Pao daily that China will launch war games along the coast of Fujian province opposite Taiwan Saturday.

Jan Jyh-Hong, a director at the cabinet's Mainland Affairs Council (MAC), told journalists that after exhaustive information gathering it found that "there is no Saturday exercise."

A Defence Ministry spokesman said that so far no unusual troop movements have been seen along China's southeast coast.

He added that Taiwan troops remained on high alert and that some have had holidays cancelled over Chinese New Year from Feb. 19.

Taiwan's Share Index, which had fallen eight per cent this year on fears over mounting tensions with China, clawed back 1.46 per cent Wednesday to end at 4,758.83 on buying by funds related to the wealthy ruling Nationalist Party.

The United States, which has diplomatic ties with Beijing but is obliged by treaty to supply weapons to Taiwan, Tuesday expressed concern over tensions across the 220-kilometre straits separating China and Taiwan.

U.S. Defence Secretary William Perry said he did not see immediate prospects of hostilities but added that military exercises China is reportedly planning near Taiwan were a matter for concern.

"I am concerned about the military manoeuvring that the Chinese are doing to, in not-so-subtle ways, threaten Taiwan, try to influence their election," Mr. Perry told a think-tank in Washington.

In Taipei Wednesday, the recently appointed chairman of the American Institute in Taiwan, James Wood, told journalists that the U.S. would abide by the Taiwan Relations Act, which obliges Washington to supply weapons to ensure the island's security.

But although President Lee did not give an inch on China's central demand that he abandon his policy of expanding Taiwan's foreign diplomacy, Taipei did offer some small conciliatory gestures.

It said it would allow more mainland movies to be shown on the island and promised a measure that would facilitate slightly approvals of Taiwan investments into China.

Before noon, Mr. Lee met with visiting U.S. Congressman Dana Rohrabacher and told him Beijing's allegations that he was covertly pursuing independence for Taiwan was "standing the truth on its head."

Buchanan scores stunning victory in Louisiana

BATON ROUGE, LA (R) — Conservative columnist Pat Buchanan Tuesday scored a stunning victory in the first skirmish of the 1996 U.S. presidential race, dealing a deadly blow to Texas Sen. Phil Gramm.

The vote came in presidential caucuses in the southern state of Louisiana, which was expected to be a Gramm stronghold. Apart from Sen. Gramm and Mr. Buchanan, only conservative radio talk show host Alan Keyes entered the contest.

With all the votes in, Mr. Buchanan won 62 per cent of the vote to Sen. Gramm's 38 per cent. That was enough to give Mr. Buchanan 13 delegates to the Republican National Convention while Sen. Gramm took eight.

Six Republican candidates, including Senate majority leader Bob Dole and publisher Steve Forbes, sat out the election to preserve the traditional status of Iowa and New Hampshire as the first states to vote Iowa holds its caucuses, viewed as the first major test of the campaign, next Monday.

The Republican presidential nominee needs 996 delegates at the national convention to ensure selection.

With Cajun music playing, an excited Buchanan claimed a major victory. "The battle of the bayou is over and it has ended in a great triumph for the Buchanan brigades."

"This is a victory for a new conservatism of the heart ... this is a conservatism of faith, family and country," he declared.

According to exit polls Mr. Buchanan won due mainly to a heavier than expected turnout by ultra-conservative religious Christian voters, including fellow Catholics.

His populist campaign, playing heavily on protectionist rhetoric, also won him the support of lower income voters.

However, only around 30,000 of the state's 486,000 registered Republicans showed up to vote in the election.

The Louisiana vote was a heavy, perhaps even a deadly blow for Sen. Gramm, who comes from a neighbouring state and had confidently predicted picking up all 21 delegates to the Republican National Convention.

Mr. Buchanan, who last week won the backing of Louisiana's newly elected Republican Gov. Mike Foster, mounted an unexpectedly strong campaign.

"This is a major upset for Gramm and it's the only thing that makes the caucus interesting," said Wayne Parent, a Louisiana State University analyst.

"This is shaping up to be a three-man race between Dole, Forbes and Buchanan," he said.

Sen. Gramm gambled heavily in Louisiana. His supporters were behind the state's attempt to jump to the head of the line in the presidential campaign.

Louisiana Republicans originally bid to hold the first election of the campaign in an effort to increase the south's influence in the presidential selection process.

But Iowa and New Hampshire, traditional sites of the opening presidential preference votes, reacted furiously to the challenge and managed to persuade most of the field to boycott Louisiana.



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Who's guilty in Bosnia?

THE CONTINUED anguish over the fate of about tens of thousands of Bosnian Muslims missing since the fall of Srebrenica to Bosnian Serbs last July cannot be simply blamed on the Serbs who captured the area but also the U.N. itself which declared the region a safe area and did nothing to honour its commitment. The U.N. thus cannot just admit responsibility for atrocities and mass killings that the people of the city may have been subjected: it must be held accountable legally, politically and economically. The inaction of the U.N. peace-keeping forces to protect the city from the onslaught of the Serbs at least by airpower which was available to it cannot be allowed to slip unnoticed.

The families of the victims as well as the government in Sarajevo are entitled to raise the issue of the link between the inaction of the U.N. and the acts of genocide that appears to have forged at the General Assembly as well as the Security Council. The U.N. cannot hide behind the abused allegation that it could not have foreseen what happened or the worn-out protestation that it was powerless to act. The entire world knew that war crimes and crimes against humanity were likely to take place should Srebrenica fall to the Serbs. The U.N. cannot plead innocence in this vein. Neither can the international organisation claim that it had no effective means at its disposal to stop the slaughter. NATO airpower was available and could have been used had the U.N. called for it in time to check the advance of the Serbian invaders against a city that was declared safe for civilians.

As a matter of fact Washington decided to assume a greater role in Bosnia and use troops when it became clear that the U.N.'s policy there lacked credibility and was becoming totally bankrupt. The replacement of U.N.'s machinery in the former Yugoslavia by NATO was a testimony to the grave omissions of the former. The fact remains that besides the Serbs, the U.N. must assume and recognise its own responsibility for what had happened.

ARABIC PRESS COMMENTARIES

A COLUMNIST in Al Ra'i advised the government to talk less about plans and policies and act more towards fulfilling King Hussein's dream of a "white revolution" to invigorate the country politically, socially and economically. Tareq Maswareh said that what is required is action and diligent, serious work to implement the directives of the King and to satisfy the public, warning that people are fed up with promises and mere talk, and expect action and serious work. It is no more acceptable to only hear talk about rescuing agriculture, reducing unemployment or developing education, and what is needed is action and results, continued the writer. Advanced nations like Germany and Japan translated their dreams into concrete action and plans into industry, universities, banks and other aspects of development, and never spoke about playing regional roles, continued the writer. He said that Jordan should follow these nation's examples of giving priority to domestic affairs and internal issues while regional roles and other matters can wait.

AL DUSTOUR daily expressed the view that U.S. Secretary of State Warren Christopher's current shuttle diplomacy in the Middle East will be the last this year and will be marked by total failure in trying to reconcile the Syrian and the Israeli positions. The Americans and the Israelis are already starting to get involved in general elections and their zeal towards pursuing efforts for a comprehensive peace is bound to weaken because their minds are focused on internal affairs, said the paper. For its part, Israel has been talking about bringing forward the general elections, and such move came close on the heels of the failed round of Syrian-Israeli negotiations near Washington, argued the daily. The Israelis have been saying that the elections will not affect their enthusiasm towards pursuing the negotiations with Syria, said the paper, but it remains to be seen in the coming weeks whether this is true or not. However, given the fact that the Israelis and the Syrians are separated by irreconcilable ideas about a settlement, said the daily, the U.S. secretary will by no means be able to finish his mission in a satisfactory manner during the present or near future meetings.

The View from the Academia

Teaching right values — an invaluable asset

Dr. Ahmad Y. Majdoubeh

THE OTHER day, I read in one of our Arabic dailies an interesting piece entitled "Memoirs of a Teacher." The piece tells the story of a dramatic encounter in an Arabic lesson on "Contentment" (Alqana'a) between the author herself — a believing (and all-knowing) teacher — and a sceptical (and ultimately ignorant) student. The piece is presumably written with the aim of publicising the teacher's method of instruction and the nature of moral values she imparts to her students.

The teacher begins by asking the students to read the subject silently, and then together they explain the difficult words and discuss the general meaning. So far so good. Suddenly, a student raises her hand requesting permission to speak. Permission granted, an interesting encounter ensues. The student starts by saying that at times she thinks for "very long hours" about the difference between her life in her "very humble" home and the life of her friend. The student is deprived of "everything" her friend has. She "adores" the "clothes" and the "shoes" her friend buys from the most "refined" shops abroad. She has never been in an airplane, has never worn "expensive clothes," and has never had a "car of her own."

As the student's dilemma heightens and the plot becomes increasingly "Egyptian," the student almost cries. She is, she tells us, unable to sleep at night — thinking about her friend's clothes and new shoes (poor soul!). The sad thoughts soon lead to serious grief and real depression. "How can I therefore be content and happy?" The teacher has a ready answer. "But, my daughter, don't forget that you are in the best of health, that you have two parents, that you have been given the opportunity to learn, that you have an eye with which you can see, an ear with which you can hear, and a foot on which you can walk."

The maternal tone soon changes into that of an expert psychologist or sociologist. "Suppose you are deprived of one of your parents, how would you then feel?" "Suppose you were one of those kids whose parents cannot afford to send them to school?" The student is not yet persuaded. She challenges the teacher, "But, my dearest teacher, my friend also has everything you have mentioned, and much more. I am not convinced." Bingo!

The teacher is now forced to sway her through a very ingenious demonstration. She asks the student to raise her head up, stretch her neck as far back as she can, fix her eyes on the ceiling, and not to lower her head until she is

asked to. After a few "moments," the student "begs" the teacher to relieve her. The teacher firmly refuses. A couple of moments later, the student cries out in pain.

The demonstration does not stop. The student is now asked to lower her head, look at the floor, and not raise it until she is asked to. The student looks at the floor and enjoys "watching the beautiful drawings on the tiles." This time, she does not beg to lift her head. The teacher asks, "Why have you not asked to lift your head?" "Because there is no pain."

Seizing this moment of revelation and triumph, the teacher articulates "firmly" the theme of the demonstration: "Never look at those who are higher than you are and those who are better, for this will trouble you. Always look at those who are lower than you are, so that you will appreciate what God has endowed you with. This way you will be happy, satisfied and content." The piece ends here, and the student does not speak; obviously, she is fully convinced now.

What can one say here? At one level, the piece is so funny, ludicrous, silly and pathetic that one is tempted, after reading it to a friend or two and laughing at it the way you laugh at a silly joke, to simply throw it away. Obviously, the author has been watching too many Egyptian movies and too many soap operas.

But one cannot just laugh and take the matter lightly. There are many reasons why such a piece, ludicrous as it is, should evoke in us some real concern, but I wish to assert two reasons here.

The first is that the piece is, in many ways, an epitome of the sad state of our public discourse, both written and spoken. A great deal of what we read in our papers, our literature, our studies, our research, our publications, is of the same poor and silly quality. The same applies to much of what we hear on the radio, watch on TV and encounter in daily situations. Why are silliness and shallowness tolerated and promoted in our Arab culture of today? How many of the many papers published in our society are worth reading? How much of the material that gets published in our leading Arabic dailies (the piece above has appeared in one of them) is itself worth reading? How many of our poems, novels, short stories, studies, research papers, talk shows, interviews are worth reading or watching? Very few.

The other day a TV interviewer was talking to a few shoppers. I will spare you comments about the manner in

which he asked questions, about his facial gestures, about his response to the answers of the interviewees. Suffice it to say that the highlight of the interviews was the following question, asked in a most serious and philosophic tone: "Do you plan ahead of time what you want to buy or do you decide after you come to the supermarket?" Ted Koppel and Larry King can eat their hearts out.

The second reason is that the piece is dead serious. There is no irony, no cynicism and no humour in it. The teacher means what she says, and the incident is a real one, from our own schools, and not from the fictional or fictitious world of Mark Twain or Charles Dickens.

What moral value is the teacher teaching the student by asking her to lift her eyes to the ceiling or lowering them to the ground? What does she mean by dividing people into "higher" and "lower" and into "better" and "worse"? We know of course that behind the silly narrative is a serious issue. Our culture has taken pride for a long time in being non-materialistic, in cautioning its individuals against blind imitation of others, and in encouraging people to simplify their needs and wants and not be greedy. This we understand.

But our culture does not teach inferiority. We respect our elders, seniors and the successful and wealthy among us, but we do not see them as "higher" or "better." And we do not look down on the less fortunate. We do appreciate health and eyes, ears and feet, but are not content and happy just because we have eyes, ears and feet. What about children who do not have parents or do not see well or walk well?

Rather than saying this, should not the teacher have told the student that one's clothes and shoes are nice to have but that one is not judged solely on the quality of one's clothes and shoes? Should not she have told her that what ultimately counts is character, substance or brains, not appearance?

Many among us (though some do not) teach their children to be competitive, excellent and aggressive, and many cultures in today's world also teach their children and students to be aggressive, assertive and desiring of success, advancement and prosperity. It is a big mistake to teach our children and our students to be submissive, foolishly complacent and undesiring of achievement, fulfillment, competition and pride.

It is obvious that many of our teachers need to be taught not only how to teach but also what to teach.

Palestinian exiles cast their eyes on home

Françoise Chipaux
Amman

WHETHER THEY live in muddy refugee camps or posh flats in the Jordanian capital, Amman, Palestinian exiles in their teens and twenties are obsessed by one idea: going home. Some are the children of activists who, like their PLO leaders, have spent years on an odyssey that took them from Lebanon to Yemen, the Gulf states and Tunisia; others have mouldered in refugee camps in Jordan, Syria or Lebanon.

But they are all to some degree critical of the policies pursued by their parents' generation. And, curiously, they somehow dread the unknown for which they so yearn. They all want peace, but few of them can imagine living alongside Israelis, whom they see as usurpers and therefore enemies.

The very few Jordan-based Palestinians who have gone on a trip "home" usually come back disappointed. What they find does not live up to the rose-tinted memories lovingly kept alive by their parents and grandparents. "Compared with Israel there's nothing in the territories,"

says Majed. "The streets aren't paved, the houses are old and ugly and everything's dirty."

They are shocked by the difference between their own cosmopolitan attitudes and the mindset of a largely "rural" society. "They're more religious than us, family traditions are stronger and social rules stricter," says Khaled. "What with the intifada and the schools being closed, young people are badly educated. We don't have much in common," says Majed.

Something else shocked Luma: "Our parents always told us we'd get our houses back, but now I know it's not true — near my village there's a kibbutz with brick houses and gardens. You don't go to those leopards if you think you're going to get up and leave."

Young Palestinians in exile have mixed feelings about those who took part in the intifada. "Maybe they're more Palestinian than I am, and were braver and did more to get their land," says Khaled. It is not a view entirely shared by Amin: "They have more experience than us, but that doesn't entitle them to more, because everyone has

helped to fight for Palestine in their own way."

Whether young Palestinians agree with the Oslo accords or not, they all say they were delighted when the Israeli army pulled out. "It's a beginning that will lead to the reconquest of the whole of Palestine," says Majed. He says he found it difficult to thank the Israeli family now living in "his" house (in fact his grandfather's) for allowing him to visit it.

Most young Palestinians feel that peace will come only if all exiles are allowed to return and live normally in "their" country. Khaled, who supports Yasser Arafat ("There's no one else who can run the country"), says: "In 20, 30 or 40 years' time there won't be an Israel any more. If the Israelis want to live in peace, they'll have to open up their borders and let people back in. Then the two states will have to be united, as you can't have two governments in the same land. The Israelis will have to live with us, like the whites in South Africa. We suffered the same injustices as the blacks, but we'll eventually get our land back because we own it."

Many of the Palestinians whose parents have been refugees since 1948 see a "return" solely in terms of going back to villages which are now in Israeli hands. This feeling is particularly strong among "signatories of the refugee camps."

Hussein, who like his father was born in Jordan, refuses to regard himself as a Jordanian. He knows his grandfather's house by heart — the three steps up to the front door, the little corridor leading to the sitting room, the fountain outside and the olive trees in the garden. No one has yet dared tell him that his village near Lod no longer exists.

The sense of belonging to a given village is particularly strong in the camps because up to now their inmates have been grouped together according to their place of origin. But Khaled is not interested in returning to his village: "After my studies I'll go back to Palestine to rebuild the country, but probably to Ramallah or Jerusalem — they're cities and it'll be easier to adjust."

Although all young Palestinians felt frustrated at not being able to vote in the elections, they see them as a first step towards the construction of the Palestinian state that will offer them a recognised and protected identity.

"The elections will give us a state, a government, and a president, and the message to all Palestinians abroad will be: come home," says Ahmad. "At the moment we're talking about the Palestine of 1967, but later it'll be the turn of the Palestine of 1948."

And what about the Israelis? "They'll go back to Europe, America, or wherever they came from." "During the elections we only heard home-grown Palestinians talking," says Firas. "The main thing is that a government should emerge which will answer the needs of people who like us, who live abroad and who nobody listens to."

"I'd have voted for the people who have suffered for our country, but they decided not to stand," says Amin, who has only one hero: Sheikh Yassin, the head of the Islamic Hamas movement jailed in Israel. And what about Arafat? "No true hero can agree to make peace with the enemy," he says. "We fight the Zionists and he makes peace with them."

Like all Palestinians, these young people hope that their times of unhappiness will soon be over. Brought up to remember their lost country, they first want to get it back, and only then maybe think about peace and possibly living alongside the Israelis.

"Peace is good," says Khaled, "but the agreement signed is not as good as all that. The Palestinians don't have the same rights as the Israelis. We're for peace but not for normalisation, because the Israelis don't deserve it. They're doing nothing to encourage normal relations."

"There are still people in prison. Some of our fighters can't return home because the Israelis say they have blood on their hands. But then so do the Israelis. The rules of the game should be the same for everyone."

And Amin asks: "Why are Israeli tourists allowed to come to Jordan as they please whereas we're not allowed to visit our own country?"

Le Monde

Dole - wobbly Republican presidential frontrunner

By Alan Elsner
Reuters

WASHINGTON — Senate Majority Leader Bob Dole is making his third run for president as the elder statesman of the Republican Party and the acknowledged, if suddenly wobbly, front-runner for its nomination.

Mr. Dole declared his candidacy last April, 50 years to the week after he suffered horrible wounds in World War II that left him with a crippled right arm and hand.

For most of 1995, the Kansas senator led all Republicans by huge poll margins and piled up a big cash advantage, while most of the party establishment lined up behind him. But as 1996 began, the race tightened and Mr. Dole faced an unexpected challenge from millionaire publisher Steve Forbes, who financed his campaign out of his own deep pockets.

Mr. Dole seemed to lose ground after he chose to make the Republican response to President Bill



Bob Dole

Clinton's State of the Union speech in January. Mr. Dole's talk was widely criticised for its content and style of delivery and some of his supporters seemed to lose confidence that he could beat Mr. Clinton.

If elected, Mr. Dole would be 73 by inauguration day and the oldest U.S.

president ever to take office. Ronald Reagan, the current record-holder, was just shy of 70 in 1981.

Mr. Dole underwent surgery for prostate cancer in December 1991 but says he is now fit and healthy. He released his medical records on his 72nd birthday last July and boasted

that his cholesterol level was lower than Mr. Clinton's.

"If I felt as old as I am, I probably wouldn't be here," Mr. Dole said in a 1995 interview. "But I'm in good shape. I take care of myself. I exercise. I keep up a hectic schedule."

He says he outdoes his rivals in experience and maturity.

"It's going to be, first of all, providing leadership in the office by someone who's been tested many, many ways, many times," Mr. Dole said.

But Mr. Dole, known as a consummate legislator and pragmatic dealmaker, also tried to fit his message to the conservative wing of his party by cultivating a harder ideological edge. He bid to win over Christian conservatives by going to Hollywood in early 1995 and delivering a speech condemning the entertainment industry for producing "nightmares of depravity drenched in violence and sex."

His pragmatic side emerged during the budget impasse between Mr. Clinton

and the Republican-led Congress at the end of the year when he sensed that a protracted partial government shutdown was hurting the Republicans and moved to end it.

Mr. Dole's very strengths as a legislator and reader of the public mood were also his greatest weaknesses as rivals sought to portray him as too quick to compromise. In one controversial comment he told conservatives: "I'm willing to be another Ronald Reagan if that's what you want."

This is the fourth time he has campaigned for a White House office including a vice presidential run on the losing ticket of then-President Gerald Ford in 1976. He sought the presidential nomination in his own right in 1980 and 1988.

One of his biggest perceived negatives is a so-called mean streak, which was evident in the 1976 and 1988 campaigns but was kept well under wraps during 1995. He says he is just tough and that the press exaggerated his supposed meanness.

Robert Joseph Dole was born on July 22, 1923, one of

four children of a grain elevator manager in Russell, Kansas. He abandoned medical studies to join the army during the war.

As a second lieutenant he led an assault on a hilltop German machinegun nest in Italy's Po Valley. A shell destroyed his right shoulder and paralysed his arm, broke vertebrae, ridged his body with shrapnel and robbed him of a kidney.

Twice decorated for heroism, he spent 39 months in the hospital before returning to civilian life. He then got a law degree and went into politics, winning election to the House of Representatives in 1960 and the Senate in 1968.

Once divorced, in 1975 he married Elizabeth Hanford, then a federal trade commissioner and later both transportation and labour secretary and president of the American Red Cross. She took a leave of absence from the Red Cross to campaign on his behalf, saying she would return to her job even if he were elected president and become the first first lady to hold her own job during her husband's term.

Society on the Move

Lest we forget... easy come, easy go

HRH Prince Zeid Ben Shaker, taking advantage of a well-deserved "furlough" now that he is out of office as Prime Minister, is on a short vacation to Europe and expected back on Sunday. On the home front, work has resumed full-swing in the new Cabinet of Prime Minister Abdul Karim Kabariti. But one fact about the recent change in the government that may have escaped notice is that all ten first-time ministers appointed in January 1995 to then Prime Minister Sharif Zeid's cabinet were not asked to be part of Mr. Kabariti's government. They are former Minister of State for Parliamentary Affairs Abdul Majid Azzam, former Minister of Labour Nader Abu Sha'at, former Minister of State Mohammad Abu Olein, former Minister of State Taha Habashneh, former Minister of Culture Samir Habashneh, former Minister of Municipal and Rural Affairs and the Environment Nader Thueirat, former Minister of Administrative Development Moheiddin Toq, former Minister of Energy Samir Darwazah, former Minister of Tourism Abdul Hish Khanib, and former Minister of Social Development Salwa Dammeh-Masri. Unlike their colleagues and other resigned ministers Abdul Razaq Rawabdeh, Raheb Saoud, Mansour Ben Turf and Jamal Kretshbeh, who can return to the full-time work at Parliament representing their constituencies, Messrs. Toq, Darwazah, and Khanib, and Ms. Dammeh-Masri will be looking at career options as will former ministers Khaled Karaki, Basel Jandaneh, Salameh Hammud, Abdul Razzak Ensur, and Adel Qudah. We caught up with most of these ministers and asked them (or their spouses) what they plan on doing.

In a humorous tone former Minister of Interior Salameh Hammud said it was still too early to talk about what he may plan to do. Most of Mr. Hammud's career was spent working up the ranks at the ministry where he had finally captured the minister's seat. Now that he is home, he said he will think about his future after the Eid.

Hailing from Salt, where he had served as mayor until his appointment as Minister of Public Works and Housing, Abdul Razzak Ensur said that as a general practitioner he would not be returning to the medical profession and would instead look for a job where he would feel comfortable and settled. He said he is not at all interested in private business, and will most certainly not run in the parliamentary elections for the seat vacated since the death of Bulja District Deputy Ibrahim Shuleh.

Adel Qudah plans on taking some time off for what he says is some much needed rest. Since he headed the country's Audit Bureau, then was appointed Minister of Supply, he has never really had a proper vacation. He may head for the U.S., where his son is studying, and perhaps watch spring come in like a lamb after this year's furtive winter. But wherever his respite takes him, Mr. Qudah says he plans to return home and look into some private sector projects he has his eyes on.

Former Minister of Administrative Development Moheiddin Toq was rather definite about his plans. He said he was awaiting word from the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation (UNESCO) as to what suitable post he may take up there as that is where he was employed and seconded to work for the United Nations Relief and Works Agency (UNRWA) until he was appointed minister. He actually took a leave without pay from the agency to serve in the Cabinet. As soon as he hears from UNESCO, Mr. Toq said, he will take a short vacation and return to start work again.

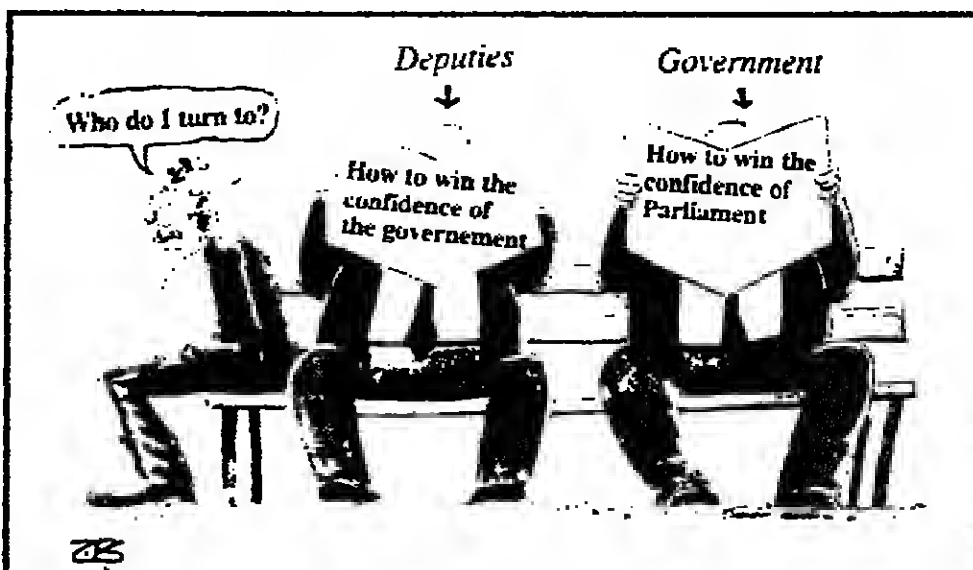
Samir Darwazah is still in Algeria on official business as Minister of Energy. He had left Jordan for a scheduled meeting in Algiers just as the government was being changed. He returns to Amman Sunday and is expected to pick up where he left off at Al Hikma, the large pharmaceutical manufacturing industry he established in 1978. Before his appointment last year as minister, Mr. Darwazah was Al

Hikma chairman of the board and chief executive officer.

Abdel Hish Khanib says he plans on going back to the private sector and "the sooner the better." Of his short tenure as Minister of Tourism, when Jordan broke the 1 million mark in tourists coming to the Kingdom, Mr. Khanib said it was a great opportunity and experience, and while he was there he saw it his all. Mr. Khanib says he will take a short time to unwind and take a look at his private sector options, then get right back to work.

Salwa Dammeh-Masri, former Minister of Social Development, like many of her colleagues said she wants to take a break before contemplating what she will do next. With a bachelor's degree in nursing and a masters in demographic studies, Ms. Dammeh-Masri has many years of experience in community development. Before becoming minister she worked at the Noor Al Hussein Foundation for nine years on projects in coordination with the United Nations. Ms. Masri said she is now involved in some projects which may lead her way as to what she does next. Meanwhile, of her husband's appointment as Minister of Education, she said "Manser deserves it. Education has been his field, his talent and his blood, and he has much to contribute."

Not to be missed also are administrative changes at the Prime Ministry. In the press office, Omar Aburda, who was appointed there only last summer, has returned to the Jordan News Agency, Petra. And columnist Jareq



Ma'arrah, known for his on-again off-again squabbles at the government, is no longer a prime ministry advisor but, as far as we can tell, will continue to write for Al Ra'i Arabic weekly.

And speaking of young blood: Bassam Saket took over the chairmanship of the Jordan Export Association succeeding Ziad Fariz who was appointed Governor of the Central Bank of Jordan. Dr. Saket, an economist with a career spanning appointments such as economic advisor to HRH Crown Prince Hassan, Minister of Agriculture and Minister of Industry and Trade, will continue also as board chairman of Jordan Cement Factories Company.

Focus on another revolution: Let us not forget the diplomatic scene, where Iranian Ambassador in Jordan Ahmad Dastmalchi Sunday hosted a reception to mark the Islamic republic's national day. Among the guests were Minister of Awqaf and Islamic Affairs Abdel Salam Abbad, columnist Fahed Feneh, many Islamist deputies, businessmen, and members of the diplomatic corps.

Jennifer Hamarnah

Finnish blondes have more fun in cyberspace, too

By Sara Henley
Reuter

HELSINKI — What do you call it when a blonde dyes her hair brunette? Artificial intelligence.

One of the most printable "blonde" jokes picked up by Finnish artist Marita Liulia on the Internet, this one features an interactive CD-ROM she made, for blondes and other women.

"A multimedia dive into femininity," Liulia's computer brew of images, sound, text and video mixes lewd jokes and innuendo with the sharp feminist wit of a tough Nordic woman.

Few computer nerds would be drawn by the programme's title: "Ambitious Bitch". Liulia's ambition is to secure a place for women in anorak-infested cyberspace.

"All the existing multimedia programmes have been designed for young males,"

Liulia said. "There's nothing for women."

Whether or not you know interactive multimedia, the simplest way to describe Ambitious Bitch is as a sort of computer game with attitude.

Among the programme's 11 randomly generated menus are Female Perversions, Erotic Tales and The Ambitious Witch. It comes in techno-toned pink-green packaging with digital sound and took a 16-strong team two years to create.

"Everything in it is designed for the woman who does not play on her computer on her holidays," said Liulia, a tiny, 38-year-old brunette.

Ambitious Bitch holds none of the medieval dungeons, buzzing enemy alien spaceships or bleeping hidden treasures common to classic "male" computer games. Though flirtatious, it

has no sense of "soft-porn" eroticism.

Liulia is predictably unimpressed by bestselling multimedia games. "It's nothing compared to my 'bitch'," she said of a recent U.S.-made hit, Freak Show.

Her "treasures" — like a pink rose that pops up with a taunting, breathy sigh at the top corner of a frame showing a tousled blonde head — can simply disappear when you try to catch them with the computer mouse.

"This is a tricky bitch, you know," said Liulia as she demonstrated one menu, which remains invisible unless you chance to move the mouse in a particular direction.

A key "female" trick in Liulia's programme is its defiance of usual computer game rules. To seasoned game players it may seem to offer little more than a bag of tedious feminist epi-

grams. "When God created man, she was just practising."

You can play the programme for hours without finding any rude blonde jokes: It takes slightly more intuitive handling than the disciplined point-and-click to persuade Ambitious Bitch to yield its more dynamic elements.

"This is an exercise in using the mouse," Liulia commented at one of the menus, sliding the mouse to bring a static Paris Metro map into motion and activate a jarring soundtrack.

As she agitated the mouse, images flashed from zoom to distant perspectives at different angles, with sound distorting and speeding up.

"here you can get your own MTV (Music Television)," said Liulia. "But you have to move."

The programme uses English and French but is deeply Finnish: Assertive,

deceptively simple and technologically advanced.

About 61 per cent of Finnish women work full-time and they were the first in Europe to win the parliamentary vote, in 1906. Yet few have reached top positions and Finns still repeat a popular saying: You find a woman "behind every little thing".

Liulia's comment on this proverb is to superimpose it over an image of herself standing in front of a sex shop.

"I can tell a story in text and then there are images which tell a completely different story," she said.

Despite the Finns' reputation as an uncommunicative people, this remote Nordic country now has Europe's highest incidence of Internet users: About 43 per thousand of the population.

Internet surfers can find parts of the "Bitch", as Liulia calls the project, on

World Wide Web Home page HTTP://WWW.Edita.fi/Bitch. She aims to update this site regularly for three years, by the end of which she expects to be using full-screen video.

The complexity of Ambitious Bitch is perhaps best described by a menu listing female qualities. Every time you click on the quality, more pile up on the screen until, like the Danish philosopher Soren Kierkegaard, you lose patience.

"To be a woman is something so strange, so confusing and complex that only a woman can manage to do it," he is quoted as saying elsewhere in the programme.

As if you couldn't guess, Liulia's next major project will be for and about men. Its title? Son Of The Bitch, naturally.

Women still outside 'men's club' of British politics

By Robert Woodward
Reuter

LONDON — Seventeen years after Margaret Thatcher became Britain's first female prime minister, women remain very much on the outside of British parliamentary life.

Fewer than one member of parliament in 10 is female and only two women sit in the cabinet of Prime Minister John Major.

The House of Commons still resembles a boozey men's club, full of hearty laughing, clever point-scoring and childish behaviour. The few women dotted around the chamber look resigned and often appalled as the "boys" fight it out among themselves.

"It's not a very attractive place for women to want to get to until it changes," says Liberal Democrat Diane Maddock.

"Women do not want to play the game of one-upmanship and so much of what goes on in parliament is men playing a game.

They feel good after it but what good does it do for people outside?"

All three of the main parties agree parliament's reputation among voters is at an all-time low and having more women MPs is desirable. But their best efforts are bearing little fruit as the country nears an election to be held within 16 months.

Mr. Major's ruling Conservatives have appointed just 17 women to stand as prospective candidates at the election alongside 17 strong MPs, despite assigning Deputy Party Chairman Dame Angela Rumbold to energise the female masses.

Mr. Major was reported to believe that too many second-rate men were being preferred to first-rate women.

"We believe it is very important indeed that we increase our female representation," Dame Angela says. "We want to encourage more women who are interested in politics to come forward and go out there and compete."

She admits this concept is often opposed by grassroots supporters. Would-be women candidates complain the party is still wedded to the idea that a woman is more useful as a wife than as an MP. Her place is making coffee not legislation.

The so-called "blue-rinse set" of middle-aged, middle-class women who are the bedrock of conservatism believe women should support their man not supplant him, critics say.

Labour, which leads the Conservatives by 30 points in opinion polls, eschewed persuasion for a diktat whereby constituencies with good election prospects were freed to choose their election candidates from all-women lists.

This policy was a major part of Labour's attempts to woo female voters, who tend to vote Conservative. Surveys show Labour would have won the 1992 election by a clear margin if women had mirrored the voting pattern of male voters.

The all-women policy, agreed at the 1993 and 1994 Labour Party annual conferences, was designed to have 90 women Labour MPs in the next parliament. Only 38 of 270 Labour MPs and 19 of 324 Conservatives in the 651-seat House of Commons are women.

It offered an easy target for Labour's opponents who called its positive discrimination fuelled by misguided political correctness. Dame Angela believes the policy patronises women.

By mid-1995 Labour leader Tony Blair was publicly questioning its viability and in January a legal challenge by two male would-be Labour candidates killed it off.

An industrial tribunal in Leeds, northern England, ruled that the policy was contrary to the 1975 Sex Discrimination Act. Labour immediately scrapped it but 34 women candidates already chosen will not be affected.

Labour women MPs were dismayed by the tribunal's

decision as, with an overwhelming Labour victory on the cards, they believe a great opportunity may have been lost to change the atmosphere in the House of Commons once and for all.

The first woman to take her seat in the lower house was Nancy, Viscountess Astor, in 1919 but women MPs rarely grabbed the political headlines until Margaret Thatcher became Conservative leader in 1975. She was prime minister from 1979 until 1990.

Far from improving their lot, many women believe the iron lady did little for the female sex. She liked nothing better than mixing it with the boys, often descending to the shouting, finger-waving behaviour of male MPs.

Certainly, behaviour in the lower house maintained its steady decline during the Thatcher years.

"It's a point-scoring debating chamber as opposed to a problem-solving debating chamber," says Oscar-winning ex-actress Glenda

Jackson, who represents a wealthy north London constituency and is often the focus of snide attacks from the Conservative benches.

The Commons' speaker is a woman, Betty Boothroyd, but female MPs have had to become inured to sexist treatment from fellow members and the press, which concentrates on their looks and clothes rather than their debating prowess.

When Conservative MP Emma Nicholson defected to the Liberal Democrats at the end of 1995 she came in for particularly rough treatment.

A series of male politicians and commentators attacked her as "silly" and "frustrated" and one even accused her of "prostituting her views" around parliament.

As Ms. Maddock puts it: "It would be a very different place with more women. We would have less confrontation, we would have more consensus and I think we would get more done."

BOOK REVIEW

Islam in context

Muslim Eurasia: conflicting legacies
edited by Yaacov Ro'i
Frank Cass, London 1995, £37.50

POST-SOVIET Central Asia is in transition, even if the impact of independence has been marginal in some areas of life so far. Some of the complexities and ambiguities in the processes going on, especially the formulation of essentially new identities for these new states, are scrutinised in this book from the Cummings Centre for Russian Studies at Tel Aviv University, written by 15 distinguished specialists.

The place of religion is well-treated in chapters by editor Yaacov Ro'i and Martha Brill Olcott. Ro'i analyses the secularisation of Islam under Soviet rule, which he maintains was largely successful, even if in rural communities religious customs and practices remained strong. For the urban intelligentsia of Muslim regions of the USSR, Sunni Islam has remained basically a secular religion, but according to Ro'i, "for the increasingly large strata of dissatisfied, disenfranchised, unemployed and socially dislocated youth", the Soviet drive to create an atheist society actually served to encourage the attraction of religion.

Nancy Lubin writes on Islam and ethnic identity in Central Asia, analysing the results of a 1993 survey carried out in Uzbekistan and Kazakhstan. Acknowledging the rise in interest in Islam throughout Central Asia, Lubin nevertheless discounts the likelihood of an Islamic fundamentalist backlash. Islam, suggests Lubin, "tends to be viewed much more in traditional and cultural terms than in religious ones", while few people appear to wish to live in an Islamic state.

The Soviet legacy to the economies of Central Asia is the subject of an incisive chapter by Alastair McAuley. He points to the experience of Uzbekistan as a model repeated in varying degrees throughout Central Asia. His basic thesis is that the economies of Central Asia were quite unprepared for independence. Their political institutions are incomplete, economic structures distorted, and both social and economic expectations beyond the capacity to satisfy them.

Valery Tishkov writes on the important topic of ethnic Russians in diaspora communities in Kazakhstan and Central Asia. The steady growth of Russian population in Central Asia in this century had stopped already in the 1970s. This was from a combination of the higher birth rate of the Muslim "nuclear" nationalities and steady emigration of Russians, a trend which independence has only increased.

Among topics examined by other specialists are the implementation of Uzbekistan's language law (William Fierman), and diversity and conflict in the Northern Caucasus (Moshe Ganner). The concept of "traditionalism" in Central Asian societies has been much discussed by Russian and Soviet specialists in the last two decades. Here Demian Vaisman focuses on regionalism and clan loyalty in Uzbekistan, arguing that political life in Uzbekistan cannot be understood without taking into account forces of regionalism and clan loyalty.

It is hard to do justice in Muslim Eurasia in a short review. With its 15 chapters of 330 pages, it illuminates a range of social and political issues, mainly but not exclusively to do with the Central Asian republics — Middle East International.

Anthony Hyman

Sorcerer's Apprentice

By Jean-Claude Elias

In spite of the widespread usage of personal computers in recent years and the increased awareness on the subject, most people still confuse operating a PC with real knowledge of computer science.

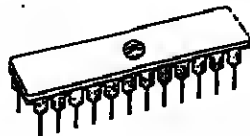
The first but the least important consequence of this state of affairs is hurting the ego of computer professionals. Those with an academic background on the topic and who make a living out of their skills often feel frustrated being compared with a common mortal who, upon purchasing a PC and learning his or her way around Windows and a couple of programmes, thinks he can make up for years of university studies. It's even more frustrating finding out that amateurs, thanks to their hands-on experience, actually do know more than seasoned pros about certain operating details.

This is particularly true when it comes to sophisticated CD-ROM games or new programmes releases. This kind of expertise however doesn't qualify anybody for a Ph.D. in informatics.

The second consequences of the above referred confusion can be more dramatic. It consists of making "amateur" users believe they can become instant specialists just by buying specialised computer programmes.

Among the thousands of programmes available for small computers there is a relatively small number of special applications meant to be used by people who should first have a sound knowledge of the subject, if they intend to have some real productivity in output. Software for graphic design, engineering, professional music production and other topics is easily obtainable by any PC owner. Except for experimenting and "playing" with such pro-

chip talk



grammes, amateurs will do nothing good with them.

It seems obvious that a physician, for example, shouldn't expect to do miracles with software designed for architects. Or that an engineer won't do much music recording and editing programmes. Unless of course, one has multiple talents and qualifications. The temptation however, to play the Sorcerer's Apprentice (by Paul Dukas, French composer of the beginning of the century) is strong.

How can anyone resist the fascination of being a pilot, an engineer, an artist, a writer, just by using a PC and an inexpensive piece of software? Even if deep in one's mind, one knows that it's not for real. That's just an experiment and that nobody is fooling anybody.

Precisely. As long as one realises that playing someone else's role is just for fun, no damage can occur.

Disaster, however, should be expected when the Sorcerer's Apprentice takes things seriously. If the damage is rarely as bad as in the Goethe-inspired Dukas' story, PC users who venture in unknown lands risk wasting precious time and ending in sad frustration.

JTV CHANNEL TWO WEEKLY PREVIEW

Thursday, Feb. 8, 1996

1:00	Fireman Sam
1:10	Disney's Aladdin
1:30	The Legends Of Treasure Islands
2:00	My Secret Identity
2:15	NBA
3:15	The New Leave It To Beaver
3:40	Adventures Of The Old West
4:30	Gillette World Sport Special
5:00	Documentary
	A La Poursuite D'Une Ligne
5:30	Varieties
	Le Monde Est A Vous
7:00	Le Journal
7:15	Magazine
	Archimede
7:30	News Headlines
7:35	Carol And Company
8:00	Magazine 01
8:15	The Album Show
9:10	Pride And Prejudice
10:00	News In English
10:25	A Journey Across The Land Of Islam
	Mali/pt. ii of iii
10:45	Feature — "Sharpe's Eagle"
	Starring: Sean Bean & Brian Cox
12:00	Madlock

Friday, Feb. 9, 1996

1:00	The Pebbles & The Bamm Bamm Show
1:30	Iris — The Happy Professor
1:45	Bush School
2:00	See How They Grow
2:15	Lift Off
2:35	Futures (Doc.)
2:50	Movies, Games And Videos
3:25	Goldrush In Alaska
4:05	Wonder Why
4:30	Give Us A Clue
5:00	Magazine
	E=M6
5:30	Film
	Le Fils De Casconge
7:00	Le Journal
7:15	Magazine
	Allo La Ferre
7:30	News Headlines
7:35	Short Story Cinema
8:00	Sea Quest
8:45	America's Funniest People
9:10	Widows
10:00	News In English
10:25	A Journey Across The Land Of Islam
	"Mali/pt iii of iii"
10:45	Second Chances
11:30	Classic Movie — "Bonni"
	Starring: Elizabeth Taylor & Richard Burton

Saturday, Feb. 10, 1996

2:00	Moamims
2:30	Wish Kid
3:00	Harry And The Hendersons
3:25	Blue Heelers
4:00	Okavango
5:00	Documentary
	Carre Vert
5:30	Serie — Les Compagnons De L'Aventure
6:00	Serie — Chateau Vallon
7:00	Le Journal
7:15	Magazine
	Faut Pas Rever
7:30	News Headlines
7:35	Major Dad
8:00	Stamp Of Greatness
8:25	Hawaii Five-O
9:10	A Fine Romance (Drama Ep 2)
10:00	News In English
10:25	A Journey Across The Land Of Islam
10:45	Feature film — "In A Stranger's Hand"
	Starring: Robert Urich & Megan Gallagher
11:50	Mancuso FBI (Police Drama)

Sunday, Feb. 11 1996

2:00	The Flintstones
2:30	Disney's Aladdin
3:00	Family Playhouse
3:25	Pugwall's Summer
3:50	Islamic History In Jordan
4:10	Okavango
5:00	Children's Programme
	Ordy
5:15	Documentary

5:30	Montagne
	Serie
	Les Compagnons De L'Aventure
6:00	Magazine
	Envoye Spencial
7:00	Le Journal
7:15	Magazine
	Sports Et Musique
7:30	News Headlines
7:35	Keeping Up Appearances
8:00	Oriental Rugs
8:35	Hawaii Five-O
9:25	Women Of The World
10:00	News In English
10:25	Counterstrike
11:15	The American Chart Show
12:00	Stay Lucky

Monday, Feb. 12, 1996

2:00	Bonkers
2:30	Richie Rich
3:00	Playabour
3:15	Bustin' Loose
3:40	Animals Of The Mediterranean
4:00	Okavango
5:00	Magazine
	Nimbus
5:20	Serie
	Les Compagnons De L'Aventure
5:50	Magazine
	C'est Pas Sorcier
6:20	Family Programme
	L'Ecole Des Fans
7:00	Le Journal
7:15	Magazine
	Cinq Sur Cinq
7:30	News Headlines
7:35	McHale's Navy
8:00	Invention
8:25	Hawaii Five-O
9:10	Russia — The Missing Years
10:00	News In English
10:25	A Journey Across The Land Of Islam
10:40	Perfect Scoundrels
11:10	Taurus Rising
12:00	Ellen

Tuesday, Feb. 13, 1996

2:00	Captain Planer
2:30	Jonny Quest
2:50	Iris-The Happy Professor
3:00	Spirit Of Adventure
3:40	Scientific Eye
4:10	Okavango
5:00	Magazine
	Planete En Equation
5:30	Serie — Les Compagnons De L'Aventure
6:00	Medical Magazine
	Savoir Plus Sante
7:00	Le Journal
7:15	Magazine
	Ushuaia
7:30	News Headlines
7:35	You Bet Your Life
8:00	Oriental Rugs
8:25	Hawaii Five-O
9:10	Harry
10:00	News In English
10:25	Three Sovereigns For Sarah
11:15	Featurefilm — Lies Of The Twins
	Starring: Isabella Rossellini & Aidan Quinn

Wednesday, Feb. 14, 1996

2:00	The Flintstones
2:30	Speed Racer
2:50	Billnye The Science Guy
3:20	Islamic Antiquities In Jordan
4:00	Okavango
5:00	Magazine — Planete En Equation
5:30	Serie — Le Cascadeur
7:00	Le Journal
7:15	Magazine
	Sports Et Musiqui
7:30	News Headlines
7:35	Evening Shade
8:00	Oriental Rugs
8:25	Hawaii Five-O
9:10	Horizon/Too Big, Too Soon
10:00	News In English
10:25	Airwolf (Drama)
11:20	The Silk Road
12:30	Second Thoughts

Half a dinar for a trolley, please!

By Samer Ghaleb Bagaeen

NO ONE could ever have imagined that a trolley would have been the highlight of a visit to the United Kingdom. A visit which involves, for the time being at least, an obligatory visit to the airport south of Amman.

This infamous 'Trolley Syndrome' involves paying half a dinar — notes please, no coins allowed — to the guy in a red jacket tucked away in a corner in the luggage reclaim area at the airport.

I have since been told that this syndrome has been around for quite some time now, but I guess that I have not used the airport during the past twelve months so there is no way that I would have known about this. In any case, I have decided to share this with you because the point that has to be made is this: We already pay more than we should to get processed through this airport, and at the same time, we are being asked to wait for the employees there to come to their desks to stamp our documents. When can so much ever be enough?

I can also bring up the anecdotes involving the sleeping car park attendant and the guy in uniform who objected to my opening a security gate in my desperate attempts to set the car free, but there is no need to bore you with the details because surely you have been there before.

These are the sort of stories that make us need to escape the silliness and carelessness that so sadly epitomises our daily lives these days, which is why we all seek a place every once and a while where we can take refuge from all our worries. We seek our places where we believe we can be at ease with ourselves and with the world around us. And I would have preferred to have called this article 'Diary of a wanderer' and tell you all sorts of exciting new ideas and places, but this silliness with the trolley just got the better of me. I will try anyway, so here goes.

Normally, we would seek out familiar places. Other times, the wanting of an adventure overcomes us and we succumb to it. The one ultimate difference between the two is that there is an element of comfort in wanting to be on some familiar territory. Familiar even though distant.

The excitement of travel comes not from being on your own, however true this element is, but from a sense of being a tiny part of a larger flow of people. A flow that carries you with it to a place that has more cinemas than you can ever imagine. Cinemas that are always filled with enthusiastic moviegoers. A place where restaurants and fast food joints are always packed. Where shop assistants are there to really assist you rather than kid you around. A place with parks and lakes that are there for you to enjoy. A place where thousands of bookshops are there for you to spend time in. A place with music stores where you can find absolutely anything you want from classical or jazz through to techno or hip-hop and rock.

A place where libraries have librarians who will always welcome you with open arms, where friends are sure to be always there for you, and where the memories are guaranteed to forever and ever make you smile.

It becomes difficult to put a finger on where to start from exactly as there is so much richness and variety to talk about. So much to see, so much to choose from, and, maybe even given the few days that you have, too much to try to accomplish.

In any case, all this remains just a plane ticket away. But things are not that easy because such a ticket, as is the case of so many things around us, is grossly overpriced and beyond the reach of so many Jordanians given the trickle of money that enters our pockets at the end of each month.

You can however get such tickets cheaper if you try to buy them in some neighbouring countries. This however remains a farfetched option as a great deal of courage and risk-taking are bound to be needed for such a mischievous undertaking.

One last thing. Travel introduces the option of an endless list of activities in arts and entertainment: Film, theatre, exhibitions, comedy, dance, opera, pop, literature, events, auctions and fairs. A list which would ensure that while you visit some exciting cities, you can never experience the sensations of isolation and emptiness that your home town is bound to induce.

ON THE LIGHTER SIDE

By: Mohammad A. Shuqair

LET'S CHAT IN ARABIC

PROVERBS

** Whenever the name of a good man is mentioned, there he appears.

Ihnil halal, ind thikro biban.

** The son of the son is a dear son, but the son of a daughter is a son of a stranger.

Ihnil ibn ihnil habib, ihnil bint ihnil gharib.

** Keep away from trouble (evil) and be happy (sing for it).

Ib'ed annish'shar wa ghanni luti.

** When modesty becomes rare, disaster prevails.

Itha qallal haya, hallal bala.

** Tie a donkey where its master tells you do.

Orbot al humar matrah mayqullaq saahbu.

Meaning: Do not question the sagacity of one who knows better.

* * * * *

JOKES

* TO HIS great surprise she burst out crying. "Why, whatever is the matter?" he asked. "Oh," she replied, "I've had an awful day. I broke the reaper, the baby has been crying, the cat has eaten the chicken, and now you come home drunk!!"

* * * * *

* A HUSBAND and wife had been having a little argument at the breakfast table and he concluded by saying: "What would you do if I were one of those husbands who get up cross in the morning, bang things about and complain because the coffee is cold?" "Well," she replied, "I should make it hot for you."

* * * * *

BANK OF KNOWLEDGE

1. If you found an old French hook dated "AN IX" (year 9) when would you conclude it was printed?

2. What is a cretin, a Cretan and Croton?

3. Who were (a) Robert Hooke, (b) Theodore Hook, (c) Captain Hook?

4. What is Kir's Coty House?

5. A Froe is
(a) a low shoe
(b) a mass of ice
(c) a wind which blows in Switzerland
(d) a tool for splitting wood
(e) An Egyptian mouse
(f) a Scandinavian woman?

* * * * *

COOKING IS ART

CITRUS CHICKEN

INGREDIENTS:

- 4 chicken breasts, boned and skinned
- 2 tablespoon olive oil
- 2 tablespoon orange juice
- 2 tablespoon lemon juice
- 2 tablespoon fresh rosemary
- 2 shallots, finely chopped
- 1 talbespoon vinegar

METHOD: PLACE chicken in oven proof dish. Combine the remaining ingredients, except for vinegar. Pour the mixture over the chicken and place the chicken in the fridge to marinate for at least ten minutes. Preheat the grill to high before removing the chicken from the marinade. Place the chicken under the grill for 15 minutes, turning half way through and basting often to make the sauce, place the marinade in a pan with the vinegar and simmer gently until it is reduced by half. When chicken is cooked, pour the sauce over the chicken and serve with potatoes and green vegetables. (Serves 4)

* * * * *

PUZZLES

Fill in letters to make a double word-square connected by the word

FARM LAND

Thoughts for this week

Friendship is unnecessary, like philosophy, like art... it has no survival value, rather it is one of those things that give value to survival — C.S. Lewis, British author (1898-1963).

There is no grief which time does not lessen and soften — Cicero, Roman scholar (106 BC-43 BC).

It is when the holiday is over that we begin to enjoy it — A.G. Gardiner, English journalist (1865-1946).

The world is a comedy to those who think, a tragedy to those who feel — Horace Walpole, English statesman (1678-1757).

Education is that which remains when one has forgotten everything he learned in school — Albert Einstein, German-born physicist (1879-1955).

All religions must be tolerated, for every man must get to heaven in his own way — Prussia's King Frederick the Great (1712-1786).

Death is a very dull, dreary affair, and my advice to you is to have nothing whatever to do with it — W. Somerset Maugham, English writer (1871-1965).

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In Iran, quiet little films are speaking volumes

By Geraldine Brooks

WHEN seven-year-old Razieh, disobeying her mother, goes to watch some snake charmers, a neighbourhood woman chides her for being where girls aren't supposed to be. Razieh, the character at the centre of *The White Balloon*, replies, "I wanted to see what it was that was not good for me to watch."

Like many current Iranian films, *The White Balloon* creeps to the very edge of what Iran's censors consider good to watch. Just beneath the surface of its deceptively simple story lies a catalogue of Iranian social ills, among them poverty, the tension between the pre- and post-revolutionary generation, racial prejudice and even hints of child abuse.

Earlier this month, in protest over a United States government decision to support a \$200 million covert plan against the Iranian government, Iran tried to withdraw *The White Balloon* as its official entry in the best foreign-language film category for the Academy Awards. But the Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences is ignoring Iran's demand. "The film was delivered here, it's eligible and we're going to screen it," says Bruce Davis, executive director of the academy.

The attention may end up helping *The White Balloon*, which is up against 40 other entrants in its category. And by leaving the film in competition, the academy may have kept Iran from gagging a star witness in its own defence. Jafar Panahi's gentle movie is itself an eloquent protest against outdated United States stereotyping of Iranians as a nation of wild-eyed Islamic extremists.

The people of *The White Balloon* are neighbourhood folks: Shopkeepers and housewives concerned with getting the next meal on the table and arriving at the in-laws' place on time. In this, and in *The Jar*, an Iranian film that played in New York last year about attempts to repair a cracked water jar at an impoverished desert school, small events become the stage on which larger issues are played out.

Social criticism is thus possible in current Iranian films, despite the censorship they must withstand. Each film must

be approved both in screenplay and in final cut. The cast and crew must be approved both in screenplay and in final cut. The cast and crew must be vetted for political and religious correctness, and a rating system determines how wide and well publicised the film's release will be.

Even with these restrictions, though, Iranian films remain surprisingly severe on the subjects of government failures and social malaise. Like the Iranian press, which is allowed to be more critical than is typical in other Middle Eastern countries, movies too are allowed to express a range of opinion. What is not allowed is sex and gratuitous violence. Perhaps it is the absence of these two Hollywood standbys that makes watching Iranian movies like *The White Balloon* so refreshing to Western audiences.

Film-makers who have continued to work in Iran since the revolution may be zealous former revolutionaries like Mohsen Makhmalbaf. His 1989 film, *Marriage of the Blessed*, indicted the swift marginalisation of Islamic idealists in a society still run by a careless rich elite. Or they may simply be artists who have stayed to fight for the cultural soul of their country rather than emigrating in search of a more hospitable creative environment.

Iranian films, especially those by Abbas Kiarostami like *Through The Olive Trees*, have been increasingly admitted at international film festivals. (Mr. Kiarostami wrote the screenplay for *The White Balloon*.) In April the Walter Reade Theatre in New York will begin a month long retrospective of Mr. Kiarostami's films and showcase new Iranian movies.

Iran's mullahs haven't exactly revelled in such attention. Iran's leader, Ayatollah Ali Khamenei, has noted that Western film juries often give prizes to movies that show Iran's poverty and distress. Of course, the same juries give prizes mainly to Western films that similarly show their society's ills. One example with which the Ayatollah Khamenei may be familiar is *Dances With Wolves*, the 1990 Oscar winner for best picture, director, screenplay, original score, cinematography, editing and sound recording. It also happens to be one of the few American films that were allowed to be distributed in Tehran. It was

approved because its stark portrayal of brutality toward American Indians shows the Great Satan in a bad light.

The White Balloon, winner of the Camera D'Or for best first feature film at the 1995 Cannes Film Festival, is striking in its almost entirely secular portrayal of Iranian daily life. Apart from an early scene in which a character passes a Husselite-Shi'ite prayer place, from which voices rise and fall, blessing the Prophet Muhammad, the film contains no reference to Islam.

The action takes place on the eve of the Persian feast of Nowruz. After the revolution, the Ayatollah Ruhollah Khomeini, trying to elevate the importance of religious holidays, discouraged observance of this pre-Islamic New Year festival. But Shi'ite Islam's gloomy commemorations of martyrdom couldn't vanquish Nowruz. Despite harassment, Iranians cling to their joyful spring

feast, which takes place on the equinox. These days it is observed with as much verve as ever.

For Nowruz, Iranians clean house, bathe carefully and don new clothes — symbolic rituals in which they slough off any lingering ill from the old year. The table is decorated with a mirror, candle and white foods. Light, fire and white are all representative of God in Zoroastrianism, the ancient Persian religion. In an echo of the ceremonial foods of the Jewish springtime Passover table, Persians assemble seven foods whose names begin with the letter S, like sabzi — green herbs symbolising nature's springtime rebirth. There must also be a goldfish bowl, with the goldfish representing the mystery and joy of life.

It is the quest of Razieh (played by Aida Mohammadkhan) for a plump "dancing" goldfish that propels the action of *The White Balloon*.

Iranian films often have child protagonists, to avoid the minefield of Islamic restrictions on the portrayal of adult male-female relationships. Actors portraying a married couple, for instance, cannot touch each other on screen unless they are also married in real life because it is a violation of Islam for unrelated men and women to touch. And actresses, like all Iranian women over the age of 9, must cover all the hair and curves of the body, even in scenes depicting private moments in the home where, in real life, every woman sheds her Islamic coverings. In addition, there cannot be any extended close-ups of attractive actresses, because that might be construed as exploiting female beauty.

With the seven-year-old star of *The White Balloon*, this isn't an issue. The child, with her gap-toothed smile and tragic eyes, gives an incandescent performance. A critic for *The Hollywood Reporter* says she "displays a range of emotions that would stymie Meryl Streep."

Razieh nags her mother into letting her buy the goldfish, then accidentally drops the money down a sidewalk grate and persuades various passers-by to help her retrieve it. Alternately kvetching and sobbing, then lit up with hope and delight, Razieh has an intensity that drags the viewer back into the sometimes terrible realm of childhood, where the loss of a few dollars can be a catastrophe.

The film is shot almost entirely in tight frames that mimic a child's-eye view of the world; it is unpanoramic with the local point always on what is close and immediate. At times the frames have the intimate feel of Persian miniatures, with Tehran's weathered mud bricks providing the geometrically patterned background and impassive onlookers gazing from the sidelines at the doings of the passionate protagonists.

The film works almost flawlessly at its superficial level, re-creating the ardent intensity of childhood in a sometimes oblivious adult world. But there is so much more going on here. Each of Razieh's encounters contains a small, ominous aside. Together these add up to a profile of the quiet desperation of ordinary Iranian lives in a society ravaged by revolution, war and international isolation.

In the early scenes, Razieh's nagging is as relentlessly maddening as a midnight car alarm. It is evident that her mother (played by Fereshteh Sadr Orfani), bustling to finish the shopping and cleaning in time for the New Year feast, is a victim of holiday stress. For one thing, she can't afford new shoes for her son — the Nowruz equivalent of not being able to provide the major item on a Christmas list. For another, her husband, who appears in the film only as a bel-lowing voice, flinging soap and curses from the bathroom, keeps up a constant flow of distracting demands.

Like many economically struggling Tehranis, the metre-reader husband has a second job. But what he does to make ends meet is kept secret because it is somehow shameful or illicit.

Economic hardship is explored again when Razieh meets a lonely young conscript from the provinces who can't get home for New Year because he lacks the bus fare. Other social pressures emerge. An elderly tailor is intimidated by



Tahrereh Ladania appears in *Through The Olive Trees*, a film by Abbas Kiarostami, who wrote the screenplay for *The White Balloon*

a young client of the post-revolutionary generation who knows how to use the new system against the old-timers. A young Afghan refugee is abused, used, then thoughtlessly abandoned in the film's haunting final scene. And there is a suggestion that Razieh's father may have punched her brother in the face.

Perhaps to emphasise the characters' isolation, almost everybody speaks with a non-Tehrani accent. As in the film *Moscow On The Hudson*, when every New Yorker turned out to be from someplace else, the Tehranis to *The White Balloon* speak Farsi accented by Polish, Turkish and thick regional patois.

Mr. Panahi, the 35-year-old director of *The White Balloon*, was to have visited the United States to promote the film during its American release. Instead, friends say he is "location scouting" in the provinces and could not be reached to comment on the attempted withdrawal of his film from Oscar consideration.

Previously, Mr. Panahi has identified the sequence in which Razieh watches the snake charmers as one of his favourites. The scene, he said, was drawn straight from his own childhood, when he defied his father to sneak into "unsuitable" films. Like Razieh, he too "wanted to see what it was that was not good for me to watch" — *The New York Times*.



The Jar, an Iranian film, tells a simple story about a cracked water jar at a school

Cinema centenary to be celebrated with screening of rare, French films

By Matthew Lee
Agence France Presse

PHNOM PENH — Less than four years after the first public cinema screening in Paris in 1895, a movie cameraman working for the Lumiere brothers — the inventors of moving pictures — showed up in Cambodia to shoot footage of the exotic country for his employers.

Now, nearly a century later, those eight little-known, short, silent films, along with 12 others, shot in Cambodia in 1921 and 1927, including a 10-minute documentary thought to have been lost for the last 68 years, were shown here recently to mark the 100th anniversary of the birth of movies.

"These are fantastic films and we are very lucky to get them," said Joel Dechezlepretre, an official with the French Cultural Centre (CCF) which will screen the films with the cooperation of the Brothers Lumiere Association, the Albert Kahn Museum and the French National Centre of Cinematography.

"These films have never been shown together and the documentary *In The Land Of The Leper King* was only shown once before in public before it became lost," said Pascal Cardeilhac, the CCF's audio-visual coordinator.

"For the Cambodians, this will be the first time they will be able to see old moving pictures of their country," he said. "That is very exciting and we have had the earliest films specially

restored for this."

Equipped with one of the Lumiere brothers' small cinematographs that doubled as a projector, Gabriel Veyre, arrived in Phnom Penh in late 1899 to shoot movies and bring them back to Paris to thrill audiences with the mysteries of what was then the French Protectorate of Cochinchina.

"The box for the film in the camera was very small, so he could only shoot about 55 seconds of film before running out, and remember, this camera was powered by a hand crank," Mr. Cardeilhac said.

He added that the technology did not yet exist for Veyre to move his camera so the shots in all eight of the short minute-long clips were "static."

Despite what modern cameramen might find horrendous obstacles, Veyre was able to capture some of the most remarkable and exotic footage of the early years of cinema including the dancers of Cambodia's King Norodom, the king himself and elephants in what is now downtown Phnom Penh.

Twenty-two years later, Leon Busy, a civil servant in the general government of Indochina, shot and compiled 11 short films ranging from 37 seconds to 16 minutes in Phnom Penh and at the 12th-century temple of Angkor Wat.

These films, also silent, were then given to Albert Kahn, a French banker who in 1909 came up with the idea to put together a photographic and cinematographic

inventory of the colours of the Earth entitled *Archives Of The Planet*.

"These may be the first moving pictures ever of Angkor Wat," said Mr. Cardeilhac, advancing through a videotape of the films. "It looks pretty much the same as it does now, except there were more trees and more monks then."

The *Archives Of The Planet* footage will be screened with a soundtrack, recorded specially by 12 Cambodian classical musicians from the School of Fine Arts, he said.

The final film in the series, *In The Land Of The Leper King*, shot by Jacques Feyder in February and March, 1927, and assumed lost after its initial screening later that year, is considered the real treat.

"Almost no one has ever seen this film," Mr. Cardeilhac said. "We only came across the only surviving copy of it by accident and that is fortunate because it is amazing."

With its scenes of rural, Cambodian life and its presentation of the massive Angkor Wat which is revealed little by little, the 10-minute documentary "evokes the prestige of an unknown civilisation or a far-away and forgotten world," according to an unnamed critic quoted in the CCF's programme.

Though the film is also silent, the 12 musicians from the School of Fine Arts will play their own composition while it is running.

Swedish pop charts new course to smash Abba legacy

By Trevor Datson
Reuters

STOCKHOLM — Name a small Scandinavian country with more global chart-toppers than you can get into a fleet of Volvos.

More than a decade after Abba, bands such as Ace Of Base, Roxette and Army Of Lovers show Sweden has more in offer contemporary music than Agnetha, Bjorn, Benny and Anni-Frid.

The new wave of Swedish pop has made — and broken — some impressive records. At almost 20 million copies, Ace Of Base's *The Sign* was the biggest-selling debut album by any band, ever. "They've out-Abba-ed Abba," an industry yearbook said.

Roxette, the veteran duo responsible for catchy hits such as *It Must Have Been Love* and *Joyride* have also smashed Abba records. The 1988 hit *The Look* topped the charts in 24 countries.

Further down the list of Swedish chart successes, there are bands representing almost every genre, including names that do not wear their Swedish origins on their sleeve.

Here we find studiously outrageous Euro-pop quartet Army Of Lovers alongside "harder" dance musicians such as Dr Alban, E-Type and Sukka Bo.

This Perfect Day, Brainpool and The Wannadies are surfing the current wave of heavy guitar pop and anyone who has not heard retro rockers The Cardigans just has not been listening.

Then there are Rednex, whose techno-pop square-dance hit *Cotton Eye Joe* will have been heard even by those who avoid pop music at all costs.

Game are the days when Swedish pop was Abba hit



The 1970s Swedish supergroup Abba

the 1970s supergroup is still the yardstick by which Swedish contemporary music is measured.

A wildly inaccurate myth asserted that Abba was worth more to Sweden's exports than Volvo, but the truth is far duller.

Music industry sources estimate the industry's total export value at about one billion crowns (\$150 million) annually, a drop in the ocean even by Swedish standards. Volvo's 1995 turnover was 156 billion crowns (\$22.4 billion).

However, official figures will have to wait until May. "That'll be the first time statistics have been compiled and presented, until then we just don't know," said Stuart Ward, general manager of Export Music Sweden.

"We couldn't be in a better position, but the momentum will be hard to maintain. It's got to be downhill

from here," the 47-year-old Briton told Reuters as he prepared for Midem, the music world's annual trade fair in Cannes.

Export Music Sweden is a body set up in 1993 by artists, the recording industry and the Swedish Performing Rights Society to promote their common interests in a cut-throat global market.

What is Swedish about Swedish pop music?

The official line of Export Music Sweden is that Sweden is a country with rich musical traditions which encourages musicians and provides them with good facilities.

"Swedes are excellent technicians and engineers, which means they are better than most at applying new technology to music production," the story goes.

One thing Swedish pop has certainly been short of

is critical acclaim, and here, too, the Abba stigma is hard to shake off.

Abba's global chart crusade was undertaken in defiance of — or perhaps with the help of — widespread attacks by critics. Now the group has been "rediscovered" as part of the vogue of 1970s nostalgia.

Today's Swedish groups have met the same fate, pigeon-holed as bland and unoriginal, with catchy tunes and vacuous lyrics. "Perhaps they're not trying to make any artistic statements," Ward said.

In reality there is nothing Swedish about the new Swedish wave, said Stefan Wernelin, national radio's prime-time progressive music presenter.

"What they have in common is that they want to write a hit and make some money. Ace Of Base were just lucky, most record com-

panies weren't interested to them initially," he said.

"It's a shame for the music, because when they try to make it internationally, it all becomes so anonymous. It's not about music and songs, it's about grooves and loops."

Bands such as Ace Of Base and Roxette have consciously adopted a teeny pop image, Wernelin said.

"Sometimes it feels like the world is made up of 14-year-olds," he said, adding what was creative about Swedish music was on the "techno" scene.

"We've got a lot of good disc jockeys and producers, that's why the dance groups are more interesting at the moment," Wernelin said.

With no clear Swedish recipe for success, those who would follow in Abba's footsteps need only follow one unbreakable rule, Wernelin concluded: "Just be lucky. That's all there is."

New class of frozen embryo orphans nearing sell-by date

By Allen Nacheman
Agence France Presse

LONDON — Rapid progress in infertility treatment has unwittingly created a sub-population of surplus human embryos, frozen in a medico-legal time warp and fast approaching their sell-by dates.

When a childless couple seeks test tube — or in vitro — fertilisation at a fertility clinic, many more eggs are "harvested" from the woman and fertilised with the man's sperm than are actually needed.

This is done to maximise chances of a successful pregnancy, and to store the

surplus embryos should the couple one day want more children.

The embryos — each four-to-eight cells and able to fit comfortably on the head of a pin — are stored by the clinics in vials of liquid nitrogen at minus 196 degrees Celsius (minus 220 degrees Fahrenheit).

Theoretically, according to the Human Fertilisation and Embryology Authority (HFEA) which regulates fertility clinics, such frozen embryos could remain viable for a thousand years or more.

But British law says they must be destroyed after five years, unless both "parents"

ask that they be retained for another five years, or instruct that they be donated to other couples for adoption, or for medical research.

Today there are an estimated 52,000 such microscopic embryos in cold storage at British clinics.

Some 3,000 of them, their five-year expiration dates due this year, have apparently been abandoned. The storage clinics have lost touch with the parents and must soon, by law, destroy the embryos — done by dropping them in isopropyl alcohol.

The HFEA says the law prohibits giving these

embryos to childless couples who might want them without the consent of both the man and the woman who produced the embryo.

"The embryo cannot be used in treatment without the consent of both," said Bill Parslow, the authority's information manager. "At the end of the statutory period, all the clinic may legally do is to destroy it."

The situation has engendered an ethical debate.

One pressure group, Comment On Reproductive Ethics (CORE), wants the abandoned embryos offered for "adoption" to childless couples who for a variety of reasons cannot go through

infertility treatment of their own.

This would involve surgically implanting the embryo in the woman's womb in hopes it would grow to a full term pregnancy and birth of a child.

The Family Planning Association is opposed.

"It does seem a shame that these embryos have been allowed to become lost, like lost property at a railway station," said a spokeswoman.

"But what to do with them if they remain unclaimed raises complex medical issues and could open a big can of worms," she said. "For example, an embryo

being donated without knowing whose it is or where it came from could raise problems years from now if its real parents turn up."

The HFEA meanwhile is launching a publicity campaign urging parents of frozen embryos to come forward and say what they want done with them.

"It is very important that people who have had embryos in storage for several years should talk to their clinics," said HFEA head Ruth Deech. "It is only with their consent that clinics will be able to keep embryos after the initial five-year limit expires."

Singapore battles obesity to trim heart cases

By P. Parameswaran
Agence France Presse

SINGAPORE — Singapore is waging an uphill battle to trim the flab of an army of overweight children amid concern they will balloon to a flood of heart disease cases.

Obesity among Singapore's younger population was a key concern of elder statesman Lee Kuan Yew when he checked out of hospital last month after undergoing treatment for a heart condition.

"I look at all these obese children. They may not reach 72 and a half," said Mr. Lee, a regular jogger who celebrated his 72nd birthday last September. "At the rate their parents feed them, or allow them to be fed, lucky if they reach 50."

His remarks took the lid off a key problem for health officials in the prosperous city-state, where food is a national passion.

A study shows that 26 per cent of adults in the island of about three million people are overweight and only 14 per cent engage in some form of regular exercise, health officials said.

But what is more disturbing is the level of obesity among school children who love eating rich foods such as chocolates and ice-cream on top of a heavy meat diet, they said.

Some 10.7 per cent of Singapore's 500,000 schoolchildren were found to be obese last year, said K. Vijaya, the director of the Healthy Lifestyle Unit in the Ministry of Health.

Many children here also do not exercise enough to keep fit.

As 88 per cent of people in land-starved Singapore live in high-rise apartment blocks, young children are not actively encouraged to play outside their homes although sports facilities are plentiful, a Singapore National Institute of Education survey showed.

Parents here also tend to be overprotective because families are smaller, according to the survey. Children are discouraged from getting involved in outdoor sports.

Health problems snowball if obesity persists into adulthood, health experts warned.

As high as one third of obese children become obese adults, running the risk of diabetes, high blood pressure and heart disease, said Lynn Alexander, chief dietician at a Singapore hospital.

Children are classified as obese if they are 20 per cent heavier than the median weight for a child of their age and height.

Overweight children could also suffer from respiratory problems because the fat around the respiratory tract hinders normal breathing.

Atherosclerotic disease, which causes narrowing of the blood vessels resulting in heart attacks and strokes, is the most important cause of death in Singapore today, health officials said.

Rose Vathinathan, the director of training and health education in the Ministry of Health, said schools were covered by an effective "trim-and-fit programme" to reduce obesity and improve physical fitness.

"But the problem is that some student tend to regain weight during holidays due to uncontrolled diet," she said.

Obese pupils are put through supervised exercise, diet and weight monitoring under the programme which had trimmed the obesity level in schools from 11.7 per cent in 1993 to 10.7 per cent in 1995, Dr. Vijaya said.

Poor cooperation from busy parents is impeding the programme's success, health officials lament, as they work to reduce the overall obesity level to three per cent and among school children to nine per cent by 2000.

The problem persists despite regular campaigns aimed at promoting a healthy lifestyle among Singaporeans, whose Prime Minister Goh Chok Tong led the world's biggest mass aerobic display last year.

AIDS drug progress hailed, prices lamented

By Joanne Kenen
Reuters

WASHINGTON — AIDS patients and doctors who treat them have said that they are heartened by major advances in treatment announced here recently but afraid that high prices will place them out of reach for many.

"The news is very good but please give us the means to provide these substantial advances in therapy to our patients," 20 researchers affiliated with prominent hospitals and universities wrote in an open letter to hospitals, insurers, and state and federal governments.

Scientists at the third con-

ference on retroviruses and opportunistic infections presented research on new drugs, some in a category known as protease inhibitors, that seem to control the virus when combined with other antiviral medicines already on the market.

Those results — including Merck's Crixivan and Abbott's Ritonavir — are still preliminary, with only a few months worth of data and limited numbers of patients.

Problems with mutation and drug resistance that have made AIDS so frustrating and perplexing could yet emerge.

But overall, scientists, doctors and patients alike were encouraged about the prospects for life-prolonging treatments available within months. The Food and Drug Administration (FDA) is expected to act swiftly to approve the treatments.

But a "cocktail" of several antiviral drugs costs thousands of dollars a year. Retail prices of the new protease inhibitors are not yet known, but activists and physicians do not expect them to be cheap, and some say AIDS patients could be faced with \$12,000 to \$18,000 a year in bills just for prescription medicines.

Those sums would be

even more of an obstacle to poor people infected by the Human Immunodeficiency Virus (HIV) that causes AIDS in Africa, Asia and Latin America.

"We finally have something to tell people — get tested and get treated. This is not just a matter of option and opinion anymore, there are treatments," said Dr. Charles Farthing of the AIDS Healthcare Foundation of Los Angeles.

"But most patients can't afford them," he said.

However, several activist groups who met with reporters at the conclusion of the week-long conference did not blame the drug

companies, as was common earlier in the epidemic. In fact, drug companies and activist groups jointly sent a letter to U.S. House of Representatives Speaker Newt Gingrich urging more government funding.

They want more done through Medicaid, through the Ryan White Act that helps communities fight AIDS, and through other public health programmes. Many federal health programmes have seen funds squeezed in the congressional budget battles.

"My job is to help the science — the NIH isn't the right place to figure out drug pricing," National

Institute of Health (NIH) AIDS office Director William Paul said in an interview at the conclusion of the week-long conference. NIH works on research and does not set national health insurance policy.

But Dr. Paul agreed that the costs could be a problem — in the industrial and developing worlds. And however encouraging the drug findings were, he said, the key to combating the epidemic remains prevention.

"We heard a lot about drugs this week," he said of the conference. "We didn't hear a lot about vaccines."

WHO says last smallpox virus should be destroyed

GENEVA (R) — The board of the World Health Organisation (WHO) has recommended that the last stocks of smallpox virus, held by Russia and the United States, should be destroyed in June 1999 as their escape would be a serious risk.

The WHO's 190 member states will take a final decision at its annual assembly in May, the United Nations agency said.

Scientific delegations to WHO have called for several years for destroying the remaining stocks of the acutely contagious

smallpox virus, but have run up against vested political and military interests, according to diplomats.

The Geneva-based WHO, which declared in May 1980 that smallpox had been eradicated, said there had been no known natural case since one detected in Somalia in October 1977.

A WHO statement said its executive board decided Wednesday to submit a "recommendation to the assembly 'recommending the destruction of the last remaining stocks of smallpox (variola) virus, which

are being held in the Russian Federation and in the United States."

The executive board, a rotating group of 32 member states, recommended destroying remaining stocks on June 30, 1999.

It also endorsed a recommendation by a WHO expert committee for the agency to keep 500,000 doses of smallpox vaccine as well as the smallpox vaccine "seed virus" from which the vaccine is derived, according to spokesman Philippe Stroot.

The resolution noted that scientific research

could still be made on the basis of cloned DNA fragments taken from the virus and "that the escape of variola virus from laboratories would be a serious risk as an increasing proportion of the population lacks immunity to smallpox."

The remaining stocks of variola virus have been restricted to the U.S. Centres for Disease Control and Prevention, based in Atlanta, and the Russian State Research Centre of Virology and Biotechnology in Koltsovo in the Novosibirsk region of Russia.

"The eradication of smallpox is among the greatest public health achievements of all time," the WHO statement said. Smallpox was endemic in 31 countries as recently as 30 years ago, according to the agency.

"At that time, between 10 and 15 million people were stricken with the dis-

ease each year. Of these nearly two million died and millions of survivors were disfigured or blinded for life," it said.

Eradicating smallpox cost approximately \$313 million over 10 years, but actual global savings amounted to at least \$1 billion, according to the WHO spokesman.

New test may help detect bladder cancer early

By Joanne Kenen
Reuters

WASHINGTON — A simple and painless new test using cutting edge genetic technology may help detect bladder cancer early when the chances of survival are best, a team of Johns Hopkins researchers said.

The test was still experimental and has only been used on 25 patients. Longer and larger trials will be needed to confirm its accuracy and practicality.

The test is described in the latest edition of the journal Science. Eventually it could supplement or replace conventional urine tests, which can miss up to half of tumours, or cytology, a more painful, invasive and costly diagnostic procedure that enables doctors to examine the bladder.

"The obvious benefit is this is potentially a noninvasive technique for the diagnosis of tumours, and the surveillance of recurrence in patients who have been treated for tumours, or the evaluation of people who fall into high risk groups," said co-author Dr. Mark Schoenberg, a urologist who specialises in bladder cancer surgery at Hopkins.

"It's a more palatable, more powerful approach to finding the abnormalities specific to cancer," said his co-author Dr. David Sidransky, who pio-

neered the molecular analysis and hopes to expand it in coming years to develop similarly simple tests for other types of cancers.

Bladder cancer is the fourth most common type of cancer in U.S. males, and the eighth most common in U.S. women. There are more than 50,000 U.S. cases a year, and federal cancer experts project nearly 12,000 deaths in 1996.

When the cancer is caught early, there is a 75 to 90 per cent chance of five year survival. But often, it is not detected until there are symptoms, and once there are symptoms, the cancer is often quite advanced.

The new test uses molecular analysis to find genetic markers for cancerous cells. These "red flags" indicate cancer cells either because a portion of a chromosome is missing, or because there has been a change in cell structure.

"Most diagnostic tests are protein-based. But in the field we are creating, DNA-based diagnostics, you can actually identify the DNA alterations in the makeup of the tumour," Dr. Sidransky said.

The test detected the cancer in 19 out of 20 patients. Five other patients were diagnosed as having inflammation and the test found they had some atypical cells but no cancer. Doctors are still studying those cases.

The test accurately gave a clean bill of health to the five additional healthy subjects included as a control.

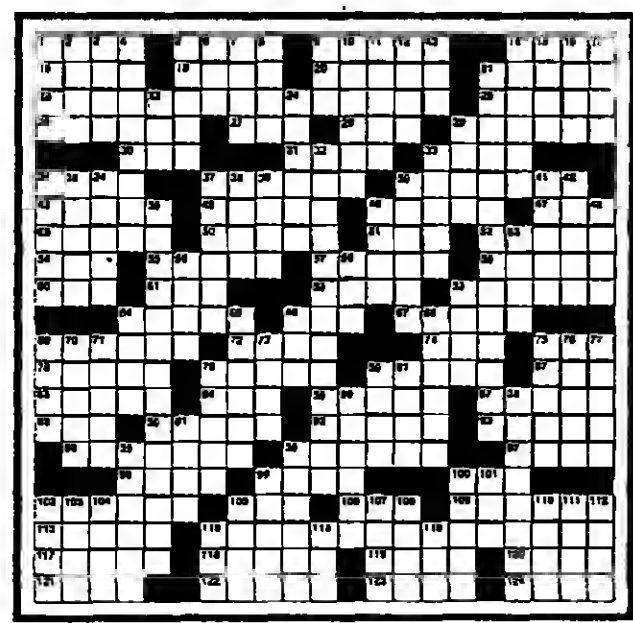
WEEKEND CROSSWORD

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By Dorothy B. Martin

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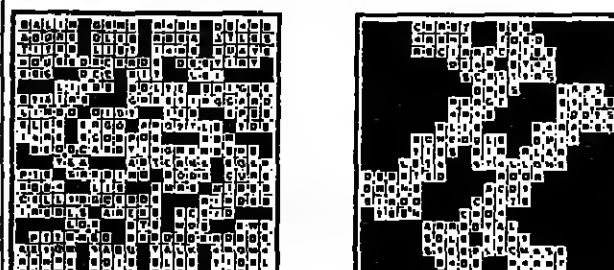
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SOLUTIONS OF LAST WEEK'S PUZZLE



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Kabariti pledges to respect House role

(Continued from page 1)

"I am very well aware that there is huge responsibility and heavy burdens (on the government) ... but we are determined to go ahead and pursue our goals to win the confidence of the House," Mr. Kabariti said.

House Speaker Sa'ad Havel Srour congratulated Mr. Kabariti upon his appointment as prime minister and expressed hope that the government's policy statement will meet the House's expectations and aspirations.

"We are looking forward for cooperation with the new government that will contribute to improving our performance and realise our aspirations ...," Mr. Srour said.

"This cooperation might be one of the best achievements of the new government."

Mr. Kabariti said in comments published on Wednesday that his government was keen to achieve Arab solidarity and enhance joint Arab action to enable the Arab Nation to counter challenges facing it.

In an interview with the London-based Al Sharq Al Awsat Arabic daily, Mr. Kabariti said his government was also keen to continue efforts aimed at improving Jordan's relations with all Arab and Islamic countries.

Jordan's interest, the premier stressed, is in maintaining good relations with all countries, and particularly those neighbouring the Kingdom.

He added that his government would also support the Middle East peace process in order to achieve a just, lasting and comprehensive peace on all tracks of Arab-Israeli peace negotiations.

In an interview with another London-based Arabic daily, Al Hayat, Mr. Kabariti said King Hussein entrusted him with bringing change that would include all the government's institutions and would remove obstacles impeding Jordan's development process.

The government, he said, will work on preparing the necessary policies and mechanisms required by "the process of comprehensive change."

It will also work on building new foundations governing relations between the executive authority and the civic society institutions, including Parliament, the press and the professional associations, he said.

The Topep-Poseidon satellite and the secrets of the oceans

By Emmanuel Thévenon

THE OCEANS play an essential part in the formation of climates. For two years, a French-American satellite, called "Topep-Poseidon", has been permanently watching the waters of the globe. The first results of this ambitious project, which is expected to last more than a quarter of a century, are now available.

Contrary to commonly held beliefs, the surface of the oceans is not flat. The rocks on which the oceans lie are of variable density and this engenders the creation of a static relief on the surface.

Even in a completely calm sea, the difference in the height of the water can vary by up to nearly 200 metres from one point of the globe to another. Besides that, and independently of the phenomena of tides, agitation due to the rotation of the Earth, to winds, to currents and to differences in temperature also causes a variation in the level of the seas.

Although this difference is, by appearances, modest (between one and two metres maximum), the phenomenon plays a crucial part in the formation of the climate. It is true that oceans cover 70 per cent of the surface of the Earth, store 90 per cent of the heat accumulated by the climatic system, and act as gigantic regulators of the Earth's climate. The system, which is extremely complex, brings a great number of parameters into play.

For decades, scientists laboriously attempted to accurately map the surface of the oceans, but their measuring instruments (buoys, tide gauges, etc.) were far too inaccurate.

So, in order to meet the requests of oceanographers and climatologists, a French-American communications satellite, Topep-Poseidon, was launched in August 1992 by the European Ariane rocket. No doubt the imminence of a big change in the climate resulting from an increase in carbon dioxide gas (CO2) was a contributing factor to this project. Indeed, the oceans absorb, carry and store this gas

which is responsible for the famous greenhouse effect.

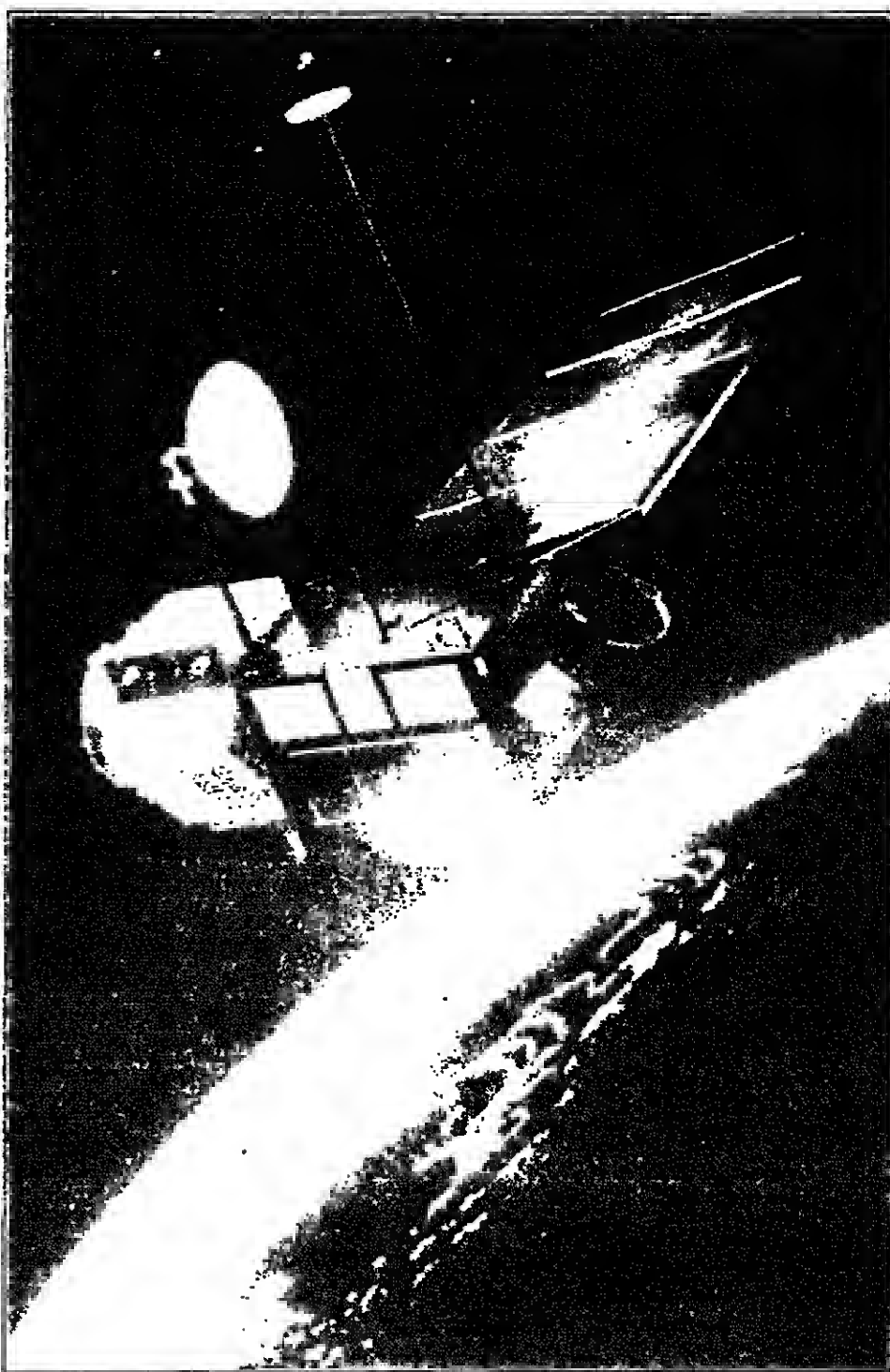
At an altitude of 1,336 kilometres, Topep-Poseidon flies over 90 per cent of the oceans' surface in ten days, apart from the pole regions, and every seven kilometres, it measures the height of the waves and the speed of the wind. For this task, it uses six measuring instruments: three to calculate with an exactitude of 2 centimetres the distance separating the satellite from the surface of the water and three others to locate its trajectory. All the information is recorded on a digital optical disc, before being transmitted to the scientists concerned.

Sloping oceans

After several months of verification and of gauging the instruments, Topep-Poseidon began to reveal some of the secrets of the oceans. It appears that the latter undergo seasonal dilatation, which is, moreover, variable from one place to another. At 40° Latitude North, for example, the Atlantic varies by 15 to 50 centimetres, but only by 7 centimetres at 40° South. Between October 1992 and January 1993, the same ocean fell by three centimetres on average and then rose again in August before returning back to its cycle.

Topep-Poseidon also keeps a watch on the great variation in the level of the seas, in order to know if global warming due to the greenhouse effect has already begun, or if it is imminent. In the past, the instruments had only made it possible to prove that the average level of the ocean had risen by 15 centimetres since 1900.

The great precision of the altimetric data makes it possible to note the "slopes" in the oceans (for instance, the Pacific is 50 centimetres higher in the West (Asia) than in the East (Latin America) owing to the Trade Winds), but, above all, to calculate the speed of the currents and of the heat that they carry. In particular, the satellite noted the progress of the deadly El Nino ("the Child Jesus") which, in the South Pacific, suddenly



For the past two years the French-American satellite Topep-Poseidon scans the oceans of the Earth (photo Actualite en France)

arrives in certain years. Owing to a weakening in the Trade Winds, instead of being pushed to the West the warm surface waters start to surge towards the coast of Peru, causing torrential rain and a whole series of catastrophes such as the ruin of Peruvian fishermen, a weak monsoon in India, a drought in Australia and Somalia, etc.

Already in the 15th century, floods destroyed the system of irrigation channels of the Chimu people who, because they were starving, were unable to withstand the Inca invaders. Although it is not yet possible to foresee the arrival of El Nino, which seems to follow a chaotic movement, the quality of the Topep-Poseidon observations made it possible to describe the phenomenon better.

More generally, researchers now have a reference map at their disposal which is both accurate and global. They will be able to compare it with future developments and follow climatic changes all over the world. Plans have already been made to launch Topep-Poseidon's successor in space in 1998. It will be three times lighter than the first, less bulky and less expensive. It is expected to be the precursor of a series of mini-satellites which, in order to be really effective, will have to cluster up space for more than a quarter of a century.

L'actualite En France

Peres: Christopher rescued Syria talks

(Continued from page 1)

Mr. Christopher said that last month's election of a Palestinian self-rule council and of Mr. Arafat as the autonomy government's president was "only one step" towards forming "an accountable government."

"A Palestinian council needs to be convened and there needs to be established an independent judiciary in order to ensure respect for law and human rights," he said.

He also said it was "essential" for the Palestinian leadership "to fulfil their commitment to amend the covenant and to take all possible steps to prevent terror."

Under peace agreements with Israel, Mr. Arafat pledged to change the Palestinian charter within two months of convening the

new legislative council, expected later this month.

At their joint press conference, Mr. Arafat reiterated that he was "committed to what he has agreed upon," but he set no timetable for action.

Lebanese Foreign Minister Fares Bouez said Wednesday Israel is trying to provoke a dispute between Lebanon and Syria by seeking to short-circuit the peace process.

Mr. Bouez took exception to remarks by Mr. Peres who said on Tuesday that Israel would withdraw its troops from southern Lebanon ahead of any peace deal with Syria if the area's security could be guaranteed.

"Peres' words are a new Israeli scheme to short-circuit Syria and provoke a difference between us and Damascus," Mr. Bouez told reporters.

Lebanon's peace talks with Israel which began in 1991 have been suspended awaiting a breakthrough in the Jewish state's negotiations with Syria, which maintains 35,000 troops in Lebanon and is the chief powerbroker in the country.

Lebanon, citing U.N. Security Council Resolution 425 passed in 1978, has demanded that Israel withdraw its troops from a self-declared "security zone" in the south of the country.

On Tuesday Mr. Peres said: "If the Lebanese government and its army can really guarantee there will only be one government and one army, as well as peace and security, Israel will not wait to conclude a peace agreement with Syria but will withdraw beforehand."

Christopher presses PLO leader

(Continued from page 12)

no specific timetable for action.

"We are committed to what we have agreed upon, but this change of the charter is the authority of the Palestinian National Council (PNC) and the process must be carried out democratically," he said.

Mr. Arafat said proposals for changing the charter would be presented first to the new self-rule council and then to the PNC.

Mr. Arafat also asked Mr. Christopher to help press Israel to follow through with

its promises to free all female Palestinian prisoners and to halt the confiscation of Palestinian lands on the West Bank.

The 1995 autonomy agreement called for Israel to release all female Palestinians held in its jails, but Israeli authorities later refused to free five women accused of involvement in the murders of Israelis.

Mr. Christopher agreed to discuss the matter with Israeli officials.

At Wednesday's meeting, Mr. Christopher also announced new U.S. aid of

\$2.7 million "to help with the democratisation process in Gaza and the West Bank."

"As Palestinians go about the crucial tasks of building democracy, they will certainly have the strong backing of the United States," he said.

"In just two-and-a-half years, peace has begun to bring great benefits to the Palestinian people ... now I hope you will have the chance to build a society based upon principles of economic freedom," he said.

The two men met at a Palestinian guest house near Beit Hanun village in the north of the autonomous Gaza Strip, near the Erez crossing into Israel.

Iraq-U.N. oil discussions

(Continued from page 1)

soon see relief from the five-year crippling economic embargo.

The national Iraqi milk company announced on Wednesday that the price for 20 litres of milk would fall to 500 dinars, compared to 2,000 dinars last week, and a kilogramme of cheese would cost 250 dinars, down from 1,300 dinars.

The price of food has fallen by half over the last three weeks because of the rise of the dinar. It is the first time since the embargo was imposed on Iraq that prices have dropped in Baghdad.

The dollar, which was valued at 3,000 Iraqi dinars before the talks were announced, was trading at 550 on Wednesday, money changers said.

Amid jubilation in the streets, the official media was also fanning the hopes, marking the start of the talks in New York on Tuesday with lead stories in the newspapers and on television and radio.

"Start of negotiations between Iraq and the U.N. All

sides optimistic," the Al Jumhuriya newspaper said on its front page.

"Optimism prevails for success of talks," the Al Thawra newspaper proclaimed in big red letters.

Guns were fired in joy and bands marched in the streets throughout Baghdad late into the night Tuesday, as people came out to cheer the start of the U.N. talks, already excited by the festivities of the Holy Month of Ramadan.

Iraq and Russia meanwhile signed an agreement on technical cooperation in their oil industries.

Under the accord, the two countries will cooperate in training oil industry technicians in exploring, drilling, producing and refining oil, the official Iraqi News Agency (INA) said.

The Iraqi government, in a bid to mend fences with its Kurdish rebel foes, will resume the supply of electrical power to its northern provinces, the government newspaper Al Jumhuriya reported.

Millions threatened

(Continued from page 12)

The U.N. Children's Fund (UNICEF) said it needed \$40 million to treat and prevent outbreaks of disease, and to promote household food security.

The SPLA launched a surprise early dry season offensive on Oct. 25, its first large-scale attack in four years. The Sudanese government immediately accused neighbouring Uganda and Eritrea of backing the rebels with troops and heavy armour.

SPLA officials say they have since ousted government troops from 11 towns and villages in Eastern Equatoria.

SPLA leader John Garang, meanwhile, claimed that his troops killed or wounded 6,000 government soldiers in the latest offensive that overran 15 villages and towns in southern Sudan.

The London-based daily Al Hayat quoted Colonel Garang as saying the casualties came over four months. He was interviewed during a tour by an Al Hayat reporter of rebel-held areas in southern Sudan.

Journalists rarely are allowed into southern battle areas with either side. The trip with Col. Garang was to within 90 kilometres of Juba, the main government stronghold in the south, the paper said. The reporter entered via a neighbouring country, which was not identified in the story.

Parties

(Continued from page 1)

election law would be introduced. He said it will be based on the ideas and aspirations of the Jordanian people and it will not be officially presented before the conclusion of a national debate on the issue.

Mr. Kabariti said it was one of the priorities of the Kingdom and that it will be also one of its achievements.

Humour's iron curtain; what's so funny? Germans ask

By Alan Cowell
New York Times Service

MARBURG, Germany — In a comic strip, a mysterious figure arrives at an old woman's door. His business, he explains, has to do with the tax on facial wrinkles.

The what? Outsiders — indeed, some Germans — may not immediately grasp the point.

But, says Wilhelm Solms, a professor of contemporary German literature at the university here, East Germans think the cartoon is hilarious, because they are only now getting used to the complexity and intrusiveness of the personal taxation system that came with unification five years ago.

Westerners, Mr. Solms said, think it is just plain silly.

The discrepancy between what East and West Germans think is funny emerged from a conference in this central city this month: Germany's division, it seems, nurtured not only competing ideologies, but also such divergent cultures that a laugh on one side of the Iron Curtain brought only a bemused frown on

the other.

Germany being a somewhat serious nation, though, united or not, the gathering also addressed a far weightier issue, encapsulated in its very title: "What do we have to laugh about?"

In Mr. Solms's view, one answer was: increasingly little. And, a skeptic might suggest, the very fact that earnest debate was required to illuminate humour's depths might indicate that the pickings were slim in the first place.

It was a discussion that touched a delicate issue for Germans, who fear that other Europeans may dismiss them as generally ponderous and only sometimes jolly — for instance, in the stylised moments of annual carnivals, when women may snip off men's ties, strangers may embrace without formal introduction and music may be loud.

"The idea that German people are as much strangers to humour as potato pushballs are to atomic physics is one of those beloved generalisations that are repeated as often as they are wrong," Marburger Magazin Express, a weekly magazine here, declared huffily.

And to prove how wrong

it was, the magazine said, just look at all the people who split their sides laughing at Marburg's "Days of Comedy" from Jan. 10 to 13, when this city reverberated with discussions of humour, exhibits of cartoons and dissertations on satire, funny newspaper columns and censorship.

But no one ever said humour should be frivolous.

"There's a new poverty in Germany," Mr. Solms said in an interview. "People have become more aggressive. So they need jokes. The need to laugh is very pronounced. Comedy is growing narrower."

By this, he said, he meant that various segments of society increasingly sought a monopoly on their own humour. "In other words," he continued, "jokes about foreigners can only be told by foreigners. Jokes about women can only be told by women."

The message was not lost on Wiglaf Droste, a satirical writer who once lampooned efforts by feminist groups investigating sexual abuse of women and children.

Ever since Mr. Droste took issue with the groups' techniques in questioning children about suspected

abuse, his public speaking appearances have been drowned out by the catcalls and whistles of feminist protesters.

Mr. Droste faced the likelihood of similar demonstrations here, but he did not appear because of the flu. His adversaries had already distributed pamphlets declaring: "The limits of humour have long been exceeded."

But such collisions of sensitivity did not seem to inhibit Harry Rowohl, another speaker, who may have offended — or possibly delighted — countless Italian waiters by telling his audience: "Italian restaurants are the best possible. As a guest, you don't need to behave badly: the waiters do it for you."

So what can and cannot be mocked in Germany?

"Hitler jokes are difficult," Mr. Solms said, "and you can't make jokes about the anti-fascist movement."

On the other hand, humorous erotic poetry, political satire, the absurd, Christianity, the semi-obscene and the grotesque are all permissible.

Take, for instance, the drawings of Eugen Egner, who sometimes blends absurdity with social comment.

In one cartoon on exhibit here, a rabbit carrying a bass guitar and dressed as a jester shouts at a rat in a crown and a rabbit in a skirt: "Halt! May I please see your bass guitar?"

To which the rat, as if alluding to the identity documents Germans are supposed to carry at all times, replies, "The one day you leave home without it!"

Some wit depends strictly on context, as Mr. Solms suggested in a paper offering textual analysis of German humour.

Thus, he said, "Buy Only Free-Range Women" — the title of a German humour book and a wordplay on advertising for free-range eggs — was fine on a book jacket, where its irony was unmistakable. "As a bumper sticker, even the most macho man would find it irritating," he wrote.

But, to answer the question in the conference's name, is there really so much to laugh about?

"Of course there's not much laughing matter," Mr. Rowohl said.

And one reason for that was about as serious as you can get. "German humour was mainly Jewish humour, and the United States inherited that," he said.

International Herald Tribune

Minister of supply warns merchants against price manipulation, monopoly

By Sa'eda Kilani
Special to the Jordan Times

AMMAN — Minister of Supply Munir Sobar pledged to take to court all merchants that manipulate prices of commodities or monopolise them and called on Jordanians to contact the ministry if there were any complaints in this regard.

In the Lower House of Parliament's session on Wednesday, Mr. Sobar said that merchants who are proved to hide certain commodities will be fined and referred to the concerned court. He said the ministry publishes the telephone numbers in the daily newspapers

and all citizens those who have complaints or know of any violations should contact the ministry.

"All complaints will be studied and price inspectors will be immediately sent to check up on violations," he said. "All merchants who do not respect the law will be referred to court."

The minister was replying to a question raised by Islamic Action Front (IAF) deputy Bassam Emoush who called on the minister to systematically follow up on all merchants' violations and manipulations of commodity prices.

Dr. Emoush asked the minister to also reconsider

the food coupons system, which has been largely criticised last year as having deprived many families from their right to subsidised basic commodities.

During the question/answer period, Minister of Interior Awad Khleifat replied to a question by IAF deputy Badr Riati, who complained of the use of private cars by some Jordanians as a shuttle service to tourists in the country. Mr. Khleifat said that these actions were not permitted by law without having a permission in this regard.

A heated debate erupted however on the electricity draft law. Lawmakers argued

on whether the House should be discussing a law that has not been "sufficiently justified." Some deputies said that the government should present the reasons behind introducing such a law while others contended that the law does not force the government to do so.

The draft, which essentially allows the privatisation of the Jordan Electricity Authority in line with the Kingdom's drive towards privatisation of public institutions, has been finally referred to the House's judiciary committee to decide on whether it should be discussed by the House or referred back to the government.

Yemen raises water and electricity rates

SANAA (R) — Yemen has raised rates for water and electricity in the impoverished Arab state's latest price hikes imposed under an economic reform programme.

A copy of a Yemeni cabinet decision in January and obtained by Reuters Tuesday said that electricity charges would be increased by between 50 and 100 per cent depending on usage effective from the middle of last month.

Two riyals per kilowatt would be charged for use of up to 200 kilowatts and 3.5 riyals for between 201 to 400 kilowatts, the statement said. The charge for between 401 to 700 kilowatts would be five riyals per kilowatt, it said. Seven riyals would be levied per kilowatt thereafter.

A ministry of water and electricity official said that the rise in water rates was between 40 to 60 per cent.

Water charges would rise to seven riyals per cubic metre for up to ten cubic metres. For more than 40 cubic metres of water, the charge is 40 riyals per cubic metre, the statement said.

Water use by the government was fixed at 15 to 50 riyals per cubic metre and by commerce and industry at 50 riyals.

Unlike its wealthier Arab Gulf neighbours, Yemen has no desalination plants to turn sea water into drinking water.

The country is implementing the second phase of economic reforms, which have included fuel price rises, agreed upon with the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund.

Price hikes are a sensitive issue in the impoverished country, a small independent oil producer. Last year, riots erupted in Aden over the doubling of fuel prices.

Iraqi dinar strengthens

BAGHDAD, Iraq (AP) — The Iraqi dinar Wednesday continued climbing against the U.S. dollar on a wave of optimism generated by the possibility of renewed Iraqi oil sales.

With Iraq's economic crisis worsening, President Saddam Hussein's government opened talks Tuesday at the United Nations concerning a plan to sell \$1 billion worth of Iraqi oil every three months. The money would be used to buy badly needed food and medicine, President Saddam has previously rejected the offer as an infringement of Iraqi sovereignty.

Currency traders in Baghdad said \$1 fetched only 400 dinars on Wednesday, compared to 500 last week and an all-time low of nearly 3,000 last month.

It is illegal to trade dollars on the open market, but some Iraqis do so in a bid to guard against the country's runaway inflation.

Iraq has two official exchange rates. One has been fixed at \$3.20 to the dinar for years. The other legal rate, available to most foreigners, values the dollar at 600 dinars.

The dinar had been falling since the United Nations slapped a comprehensive embargo on Iraq following its 1990 invasion of Kuwait.

But after the government announced its readiness to talk about limited oil sales, the currency has strengthened and food prices have been coming down. President Saddam has said he expects positive results from the New York talks, and he told a recent cabinet meeting he wanted to see the dinar reach 200 for one dollar.

He has also instructed ministers to abandon "unnecessary" projects and tackle the country's inflation.

Jordan-Israel trade agreement to take effect from mid-March

By Mahmoud Masharqah
Special to the Jordan Times

AMMAN — The Jordanian-Israeli trade agreement will take effect by the middle of next month, according to Ministry of Industry and Trade Secretary-General Mohammad Smadi.

He said in a statement to

the Jordan Times that the two countries are expected to exchange the instruments of ratification in the coming few days to open the way for normal economic, trade and transport operations between them.

He said that the trade agreement is expected to be

applied within one month of the exchange of the ratification instruments.

The agreement on trade, which was signed last October, provides for the exchange of different types of commodities included in three lists: The first offers a 100 per cent exemption of customs duty, the second 50

per cent and the third 20 per cent.

The exemptions offer Jordanian commodities the opportunity to be marketed in Israel at lower costs, according to Dr. Smadi who said that in contrast, Israeli goods entering Jordan are exempt from only 10 per cent of customs duty.

India's central bank unveils measures to stem rupee fall

BOMBAY (AFP) — India's central bank Wednesday announced a series of measures to stem the fall of the rupee, which had plunged to 38.50 against the dollar on the foreign exchange market.

The Reserve Bank of India (RBI) announced the termination of post-shipment export credit denominated in dollars and freed the interest rate on post-shipment rupee credit for over 90 days with effect from Thursday.

It also announced a 66-percentage point increase in the interest rate surcharge on import finance from the present 15 per cent and said it would monitor, cancellation of forward contracts and intra-day trading transactions of authorised dealers.

"The several measures we have introduced today are intended to accelerate receipts of export proceeds and prevent prepayment on account of imports," the governor of RBI, Chakravarty Rangarajan said in a statement issued here.

The announcement fol-

lowed his meeting with Finance Minister Manmohan Singh and other top officials.

Mr. Rangarajan said the measures should lead to stability in the foreign exchange market.

"We are watching the foreign exchange market continuously and closely and will take such other measures as are necessary to ease the pressures on the market," Mr. Rangarajan said.

The central bank governor said the amended rules would not impair the "overall availability of credit to exporters and refinance to banks."

Mr. Rangarajan said the central bank would monitor cancellation of forward contracts booked by "authorised (foreign exchange) dealers for amounts of \$100,000 and above."

"Such cancellation will be required to be reported to the RBI on a weekly basis and the RBI will also be closely monitoring the dollar/rupee intra-day trading transactions of authorised (foreign exchange) dealers," he said.

The RBI governor said "pressures have been created in the foreign exchange market based on expectations which are not in accord with the fundamentals (of the Indian economy)."

Mr. Rangarajan said the fundamentals were strong, particularly in relation to "the external sector."

"The current account deficit at around 1.5 per cent of the GDP is very much under control and manageable. Some of the inflows on the capital account have also shown a pickup in the recent period," he said.

But due to market pressures, based on expectations, "leads" and "lags" have developed in receipts and payments, which have affected the foreign exchange flows," he said.

A central bank statement also warned of legal action against exporters who failed to bring back export realisations within the legally set period of six months.

The rupee remained stable

at 31.37 against the dollar for more than two years after March 1993 when it was made fully convertible on the trade account.

The central bank has kept the exchange rate stable by buying dollars to maintain export competitiveness, even though foreign inflows were high until July when New Delhi began routing overseas debt payments through the market.

Algeria to cut pay of well off to pay workers

PARIS (R) — Algeria's prime minister said Tuesday his government would cut the pay of better-paid civil servants to give several months of back-pay to 200,000 lower-salaried government employees.

"The truth must be said to the Algerian people and this is why I opted for directly addressing you over this question of unpaid salaries," Ahmad Ouyahia said in his first address since being appointed in December.

In a speech broadcast on Algerian state-run radio, he said neither the government budget nor state-owned companies

were able to pay the 200,000 workers who had not been paid for months.

Mr. Ouyahia said his government had decided therefore to take from between one day to one week's worth of pay from the better off civil servants every month up until the end of the year.

Algeria's economy has suffered badly from more than four years of civil strife pitting Muslim rebels against the military-backed authorities.

THE BETTER HALF. By Glasbergen

JUMBLE. THAT SCRAMBLED WORD GAME by Henri Arnold and Mike Argison

Unscramble these four Jumbles, one letter to each square, to form four ordinary words.

CONTH
NAVER
CREEFI
DEGUMS

Now arrange the circled letters to form the surprise answer, as suggested by the above cartoon.

Answer: "C O O K I E S"

Yesterday's Jumbles: MAGIC PANDA CENSUS JINNEY
Answer: The kind of books prisoners prefer — ESCAPIST

THE Daily Crossword by Randall J. Hartman

ACROSS

- Pleased
- The — ol one's eye
- Was in debt
- New Rochelle college
- Kind of pipe
- Soiree
- Unconventional writer
- Increases the slope
- Opponent of U.S. Grant
- Expert
- Affectionate
- Volcanic rock
- Government
- Comprehend
- Orange skin
- Looks longingly
- Angry
- Famed college football coach
- Dam
- Full of holes
- Model
- MacPherson
- Attention getter
- Sets of articles
- Climbed
- Annie Oakley
- Mo.
- "Let's Make —"
- Honey houses
- Reagan film
- LA city
- Honk loudly
- Gumbo
- Singer Bennett
- Blood carrier
- Ruler

DOWN

- Band dates
- Contraband
- Green Gables girl
- Slurp
- Wretched
- Inclined
- Papal name
- Household god
- Sea bird
- Gawked at
- Lament
- Or —!
- (ultimatum)
- Fruit
- October stone
- Portrayal of Mall
- Dillon
- Not clear
- Margarine
- Impudent
- Actress Anouk
- Like winter weather
- TV spots
- Puts in order
- Undersized
- Great golf score
- Barely won
- Nannies
- Mineral salt
- Haole necklaces
- Haole social
- Flowermg shrub
- Crank
- Country singer
- Cline
- To the left, naively
- Blind as —
- Certain car
- Famous garden
- From a distance
- Lend support
- Signs
- Pound of poetry
- Glide
- Certain degree: abbr.
- Rock group

Yesterday's puzzle solved

Y U I F S P A M S C I E N T
E T A L L E T A A H E A O
N A T O A P E R C E L T S
T H E P O N Y E X P R E S S
M G S A E R
A S T R A Y S E N D C M L
S E R I N F I L E A R E A
S P E C I A L O E L I V E R Y
A T E E B A L M S I E G E
M A I D J O K E J A S P I E R
Y O U G O A
E L E C T R O N I C M A I L
C R O A K U P O N U L N A
A M U S E M I M E L O G S
N A T T Y P E E R L E E S

Peanuts

Andy Capp

Mutt'n'Jeff

HOROSCOPE

FORECAST FOR THURSDAY, FEBRUARY 8, 1996

ARIES: (March 21 to April 19) You can easily get an associate to follow your ideas during the day today, but later tonight plan something with a fellow associate and get much completed.

TAURUS: (April 20 to May 20) You can handle easily today whatever tasks have been difficult in the past. Support a fellow associate who is nervous.

GEMINI: (May 21 to June 21) Carry through with some creative career activity during the daytime today, but tonight plan a better course of action for the future.

MOON CHILDREN: (June 22 to July 21) Make your home charming during the daytime today and later in the evening do whatever it is which you enjoy the most.

LEO: (July 22 to August 21) Get into activities today which can bring you greater happiness and beauty in the outside world. Take a close friend to dinner for an enjoyable time.

VIRGO: (August 22 to September 21) Do whatever will add to the value of property and possessions today, and later this evening handle your correspondence wisely.

LIBRA: (September 22 to October 21) Get in touch with persons who can be helpful in your personal affairs during the day. Get your appearance improved so that you will be successful.

SCORPIO: (October 22 to November 21) Begin the new week by contacting those who have good ideas for your advancement and then work out a nice plan for your prosperity.

SAGITTARIUS: (November 22 to December 21) You are able to gain a desired wish today quite easily if you go after it in a positive way. Be very romantic tonight with your loved one.

CAPRICORN: (December 22 to January 20) Plan how to gain the backing of a bigwig for some pet project today, you have in mind. Have fun with your friends in some mutual activities.

AQUARIUS: (January 21 to February 19) Extending activities considerably is wise at this time so that you can become more successful. Double-check your plans for some new project.

PISCES: (February 20 to March 20) Start the new week by getting a bigwig to give you the backing you need for a new interest. Be more broad-minded towards any new situation.

Birthstone of February: Amethyst — Dnyx

HOROSCOPE

FORECAST FOR FRIDAY, FEBRUARY 9, 1996

ARIES: (March 21 to April 19) Study your responsibilities well in the morning and also your assets so that later this evening you know how to handle everything.

TAURUS: (April 20 to May 20) You may encounter stubbornness on the part of a fellow associate today where some new project is concerned during the day.

GEMINI: (May 21 to June 21) Get into the hard part of your career activities today and tonight make better plans for the days ahead in terms of your progress.

MOON CHILDREN: (June 22 to July 21) Postpone pleasure until the evening when conditions are more favourable. Don't start a disagreement with your mate or there could be difficulties.

LEO: (July 22 to August 21) Get out of the house early today and avoid a possible disagreement which could bring serious difficulties for some time to come.

VIRGO: (August 22 to September 21) Don't criticise a partner during the day today, or a big battle can ensue. Be very careful in driving on the highway and visit good friends.

LIBRA: (September 22 to October 21) If you take any risks today, you could make some big financial mistake. Do nothing which could damage real estate you own.

SCORPIO: (October 22 to November 21) You want to have your own way exclusively today, but if you are forceful you could wind up behind the eight-ball in some predicament.

SAGITTARIUS: (November 22 to December 21) Situations which are keeping you from gaining your wishes today are getting you down, but handle them individually and wisely.

CAPRICORN: (December 22 to January 20) You may find it difficult to gain some personal goal in the morning today, but by this evening everything will be alright.

AQUARIUS: (January 21 to February 19) Use care and don't irritate higher-ups in any way during the daytime today, and then the evening is fine for social fun with your loved ones.

PISCES: (February 20 to March 20) It is all right to study into new interests during the daytime today, but don't commit yourself to any of them until later tonight.

Birthstone of February: Amethyst — Dnyx

Bull forges vast U.S.- Japanese alliance in personal computers

PC boom may have peaked in U.S., makers look abroad

WASHINGTON (AFP) — Personal computer (PC) makers had a banner year in 1995, but analysts say the boom in PCs may be over because of the near saturation of the largest market, the United States.

Industry analysts say that more than one-fourth of U.S. households have at least one PC, and most of the others need a significant reason or big price break to buy a computer at prices currently around \$2,000.

But manufacturers see brighter prospects abroad, particularly in Japan, where

sales are strong, and in emerging markets like Latin America and Eastern Europe.

Dataquest, a market research group in San Jose, California, estimated worldwide PC shipments at 59.7 million units in 1995, a 24.7 per cent jump from 1994.

International Data Corp. (IDC) another leading research group, said 1995 worldwide growth was 24 per cent but predicts it will slow to 18.5 per cent this year.

"That is largely due to the downshift in the U.S. (growth) rate," said IDC

vice-president Bruce Stephen.

U.S. growth is expected to be 16.4 per cent in 1996, down from 22 per cent growth in 1995, IDC said.

That's still strong, but it means computer manufacturers must temper their expectations driven by the PC explosion of the last four years in the United States for home use.

In the United States, "I think we are reaching close to saturation levels among the types of households who are buying PCs," said Mr. Stephen.

Dataquest's Scott Miller noted that 60 per cent of U.S. households with income over \$100,000 already have one or more PCs.

In order to grow more, the industry "has to make PCs more relevant," by making computers and software more adapted to daily life, he said.

Still, no one is sounding the death knell for the computer industry.

"With growth of 15 or 16 per cent, the stereo or the TV industry would be thrilled," said IDC's Stephen Baker.

But he added: "Everyone had been counting on great big rates of growth, but they've lost track of who their customer is going to be."

Aside from a home or automobile, a computer is often the largest household purchase, and the industry is now looking for the right kind of product that will have appeal than the current desktop PC.

"I think the magic price is certainly under \$1,000," Mr. Baker said.

But it is not clear whether the new machine will be a \$500 Internet device — which is now under development, but which needs a broader range of software on the Internet to make it appealing — a modified desktop or a computer hooked up to a television via cable.

Outside the United States, Japan's boom in PCs — 60 to 70 per cent growth through much of 1995 — will slow, as will Western Europe's, the analysts said.

But Latin America is expected to rebound from a disastrous year in Mexico. IDC said overall Latin America PC sales grew 11 per cent

despite a 37 per cent decline in the Mexican market.

The Asia-Pacific region excluding Japan is the only region where steady growth above 20 per cent is expected through the year 2000, said Mr. Stephen.

U.S. firms including industry leader Compaq continue to dominate the global industry, but Asian manufacturers are aggressively moving into the U.S. market, according to Mr. Stephen.

Sony is expected to sell in the United States this year and Toshiba is likely to move into desktops.

Compaq remained the worldwide industry's top PC supplier last year, shipping 5.9 million units, or 10 per cent of the market, followed by IBM's 4.7 million and Apple's 4.6 million. Dataquest said.

Hewlett-Packard and Acer America — the unit of a Taiwan firm — posted the strongest gains of all computer makers, at 126.6 per cent and 80 per cent, respectively.

Compaq's Rebecca Nahas said the notion of finding cheaper machine is not necessarily the answer to slower growth.

"People around the world are going to buy a product not solely on price, but on what's behind it," she said. The quality of the technology, she said, is "more of a deciding factor than the price."

Meanwhile, Bull, NEC of Japan and the U.S. company Packard Bell announced a vast common offensive into the market for personal and multi-media computers Wednesday, based on a merger of Packard Bell and Bull's

Zenith Data Systems.

Packard Bell Electronics is to receive more than \$650 million (3.3 billion francs) and NEC and Bull will provide extra resources to enable it to develop multi-media computers for the U.S. market, the three companies announced.

NEC, which holds shares in Packard Bell and in Bull, is to contribute \$283 million in preference shares to the alliance, NEC told a press conference in Tokyo.

The announcement was made in Sacramento, Tokyo and Paris the day after Bull president Jean-Marie Descarpentries had announced a dramatic improvement in the fortunes of his company, which has been resuscitated with huge amounts of state aid in recent years.

Two years ago it had appeared to be on the verge of disintegration.

Descarpentries said Tuesday that the group had made a profit of at least 200 million francs (\$40 million), and perhaps 300 million francs or more, in 1995.

He is expected to announce major changes in the board room on Monday.

Packard Bell, strengthened by the activities of Zenith Data Systems (ZDS), would achieve annual sales of \$5.5 billion and take more than 13 per cent of the U.S. market, becoming the biggest supplier, they forecast.

NEC, which had sales of \$43 billion in 1994-95 and is the biggest manufacturer in the Japanese market, and Bull, which had sales of 29 billion francs in 1994, are to maintain their holdings of 19.9 per cent each in Packard Bell. In return for their contributions of cash or other support, they would receive preference bonds.

Descarpentries described the arrangement on Wednesday as "a winning world alliance playing a major role in the strongly-growing markets for personal computers and multi-media."

The president of NEC, Tadashi Sekimoto, said that the alliance was a "decisive step in long-term cooperation to develop the activities of the three companies on the world market for computer equipment."

The president and founder of Packard Bell, Beny Alagim, said that his company would use its modern production infrastructure to produce a strengthened range of products for companies and administrations.

DAILY BEAT

A review of news from the Arabic press

Transport company generates JD 1.37 million net profit in 1995

★ THE UNIFIED for Organising Land Transport Company achieved a JD 1.37 million net profit last year compared to a net JD 1.28 million from Sept. 5, 1993 until Dec. 31, 1994. The company transported a total of 5,468,784 tonnes of goods (4.81 million inside the Kingdom and 0.65 million outside the country) and earned JD 4.55 million from charges last year. Investments were increased by 333 per cent from JD 219,606 in 1994 to JD 867,064 in 1995. The management of the company is recommending to the shareholders the distribution of JD 550,000, or 11 per cent, in dividends. The company's officials currently discussing with the concerned authorities two projects for setting up a truck terminal in Aqaba and another large truck terminal near Amman on an area of about 3,000 dunums (Al Dastour).

Farmers reduce supplies of broiler chicken to push up prices

★ THE LOCAL market is currently witnessing an unjustified shortage of broiler and frozen chicken in what is seen as a move by farmers to reduce the volume of production to push for higher prices. Poultry farmers are demanding that prices be raised from JD 1.250 to JD 1.450 per kilogram while the Ministry of Supply is holding to the fixed price ceiling agreed by a committee from the ministries of supply and agriculture and representatives of the farmers. A senior official at the Ministry of Supply said the ministry was no longer in the business of importing and fixing prices of frozen chicken due to the surplus in previous months and to the achievement of a high level of self sufficiency of this product. The role of the ministry, he added, was to announce a price ceiling for frozen chicken leaving the freedom for local farmers and importers to sell their product at any price below the fixed ceiling. The ministries of supply and agriculture are putting the blame on producers trying to exploit the large demand for chicken in Ramadan to compensate losses farmers say they had incurred when prices were low due to large surpluses (Al Rai).

Aqel: Credit facilities to traders in shares have declined

★ CREDIT FACILITIES extended by licensed banks for share purchases have declined over the past three years dropping from JD 20 million in 1993 to JD 17 million in 1994 and further down to JD 14 million by the end of October 1995. Arab Bank Executive Manager Mufleh Aqel has said. He pointed out that investment portfolios of all licensed banks stood at approximately JD 219 million on Oct. 31, 1995. Mr. Aqel said the banking system gave JD 400 million in financing the national economy last year out of a total JD 3.58 billion of credit facilities at the end of September of 1995. He indicated that JD 900.5 million were credits to the commercial sector and about JD 487 million were credits to the industrial sector (Al Aswaq).

EU offers to help Jordanian Businessmen Association

★ THE Jordanian Businessmen Association (JBA) said Wednesday that the European Union (EU) has expressed readiness to offer an assistance needed by the association in organising a meeting between Jordanian business people and EU officials, due to be convened in May of this year. According to a JBA press release, the message, conveyed by Yves Gazzo the head of the EU delegation to Jordan, said that the EU office will make the arrangements for the meeting expected to be held in May in Brussels. Mr. Gazzo paid tribute to the JBA for its activities and for its drive to create joint business councils with business societies in the EU countries and voiced EU backing for the JBA drive to bolster European-Jordanian cooperation in trade and economic fields. He said that EU countries were keen on reaching partnership agreements with the countries in the Mediterranean region and will help the JBA's endeavours during its delegation's tour of Spain, the United Kingdom and the EU headquarters in Brussels. The JBA last month organised a seminar in which ambassadors of the EU countries in Jordan took part, along with 150 Jordanian businessmen, to discuss ways to promote relations with Europe, according to the statement. The JBA has already created joint business councils with Britain, France and Spain and, according to the statement, it is pursuing efforts to create similar councils with the rest of the EU nations. Meanwhile, the Amman Chamber of Commerce said Wednesday that it has prepared a comprehensive study on cooperation between the EU and Jordan to achieve the aspired partnership between the two sides. The study was worked out in light of documents agreed on between the EU and the Arab countries in Tunis and the EU declaration issued in March of 1995 about the principles of the aspired partnership to promote EU economic ties with the countries of the Mediterranean region.

JORDAN FINANCIAL MARKET				
HOUSING BANK CENTER AMMAN - SHAMSANI				
TELEPHONE: 607171 / 607199				
ORGANIZED MARKET SHARE PRICE LIST FOR WEDNESDAY 07/02/1996				
COMPANY'S NAME	NO. OF SHARES	VALUE TRADED	PREV. CLOSING PRICE	CHANGING PRICE
ARAB BANK P.C.	32	7460	236.000	235.000
JORDAN NATIONAL BANK	1610	7085	4.350	4.340
BANK OF JORDAN	200	720	3.650	3.650
MIDDLE EAST INVESTMENT BANK	10800	12180	1.160	1.160
INDUSTRIAL DEVELOPMENT BANK/JEN	378	956	2.550	2.550
JORDAN GULF BANK	44850	46628	1.040	1.040
JORDAN ISLAMIC BANK	5180	18226	3.520	3.520
REIT ELBAI SAVINGS INVESTMENT FOR HOUSING	1000	3100	3.100	3.100
AMMAN BANK FOR INVESTMENT	6750	5670	840	840
PHILADELPHIA INVESTMENT BANK	6050	8134	1.350	1.350
BANKS SECTOR	76601	111733	INDEX NUMBER: 187.03	CHANGE: -0.23%
JORDAN FIRE INSURANCE	250	695	2.780	2.780
INSURANCE SECTOR	250	695	INDEX NUMBER: 129.37	CHANGE: -0.14%
JORDANIAN ELECTRIC POWER	9500	16468	1.740	1.740
URBID DISTRICT ELECTRICITY	650	913	1.420	1.420
VEHICLES OWNERS FEDERATION	257	1722	6.700	6.700
JORDAN NATIONAL SHIPPING LINE	1890	4372	2.300	2.300
NATIONAL PORTFOLIO SECURITIES	2860	4026	1.370	1.370
REAL ESTATE INVESTMENT	2000	1800	0.900	0.900
JORDAN INTERNATIONAL TRADING CENTER	525	550	1.060	1.050
UNITED MIDDLE EAST & COMMODORE HOTELS	1350	2903	2.130	2.130
ARAB HOTEL FOR INVESTMENT & EDUCATION	7050	24323	3.450	3.450
KARKA PRIVATE UNIVERSITY	3371	3913	1.150	1.170
UNIFIED CO. FOR ORGANISING LAND TRANS.	2800	6160	2.200	2.200
SERVICES SECTOR	31703	67226	INDEX NUMBER: 128.32	CHANGE: -0.27%
THE JORDAN CEMENT FACTORIES	4618	17026	3.700	3.690
THE ARAB POTASH	750	4166	5.550	5.570
JORDAN PETROLEUM REFINERY	44	438	10.000	9.950
ARAB PHARMACEUTICAL MANUFACTURING	5093	32023	4.550	4.530
JORDAN CERAMIC INDUSTRIES	2000	12380	6.180	6.190
THE JORDAN PAPER MANUFACTURING	1200	2736	2.280	2.280
BAITA INDUSTRIES	100	214	2.140	2.140
DAR AL DAWA DEVELOPMENT & INVESTMENT	6196	45282	7.300	7.320
ARAB ALUMINIUM INDUSTRY	200	1130	5.650	5.650
LEVESTOCK & POULTRY	10400	5616	0.550	0.540
ARAB PAPER CONVERTING & TRADING	3450	4865	1.410	1.410
NATIONAL STEEL INDUSTRY	1100	1773	1.600	1.600
NATIONAL INDUSTRIES	2600	1586	0.980	0.990
INTERMEDIATE PETRO-CHEMICAL INDUSTRIES	1350	1904	1.410	1.410
JORDAN SOFTWOOD INDUSTRIES	900	891	0.970	0.990
JORDAN POLYMER-CHEMICALS	3500	40225	1.150	1.150
ARAB CENTER FOR PETROLEUM & CHEMICALS	1820	3986	2.190	2.190
UNIVERSAL MODERN INDUSTRIES	800	2440	3.050	3.050
JORDAN INDUSTRIAL RESOURCES CO.	5400	10093	1.880	1.870
JORDAN NEW CABLE COMPANY	6280	8250	1.320	1.320
EL-DAY READY READY MANUFACTURING CO.	3750	805	2.150	2.150
INTERNATIONAL TOBACCO & CIGARETTES	800	1095	1.370	1.360
UNION CHEMICAL & VACUUMABLE OIL INDUSTRY	200	298	1.540	1.490
INDUSTRIAL SECTOR	61549	160779	INDEX NUMBER: 123.18	CHANGE: -0.05%
GRAND TOTAL	170103	340433	INDEX NUMBER: 155.06	CHANGE: -0.08%
NO. OF TRADED SHARES IN PARALLEL MARKET		73232		
VALUE TRADED IN PARALLEL MARKET		54016		

LONDON EXCHANGE RATES

LONDON (R) — Following are the buying and selling rates for leading world currencies and gold against the dollar on the London foreign exchange and bullion markets Wednesday.

One U.S. dollar	1.3700/10	Canadian dollar	1.4776/86
	1.4776/86	Deutchmarks	1.6550/61
	1.6550/61	Dutch guilders	1.2078/88
	1.2078/88	Swiss francs	30.3741
	30.3741	Belgian francs	5.0736/86
	5.0736/86	French francs	1577.38/8
	1577.38/8	Italian lire	106.18/18
	106.18/18	Japanese yen	7.0250/50
	7.0250/50	Swedish crowns	6.4480/30
	6.4480/30	Norwegian crowns	5.7156/56
	5.7156/56	Danish crowns	1.4142/52
	1.4142/52	Singapore dollars	0.7553/58
	0.7553/58	Australian dollars	7.7305/15
	7.7305/15	Hong Kong dollars	
One sterling	\$1.5360/70		
Gold (ounce)	\$414.30/41.50		

JORDAN MARKET PLACE

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JORDAN MARKET PLACE

Financial Markets

in co-operation with
Cairo Amman Bank

Central Bank of Jordan Exchange Rate Bulletin
Date: 7/2/1996

Currency	Bid	Offer
U.S. Dollar	0.7080	0.7100
Sterling Pound	1.0888	1.0982
Deutsche Mark	0.4793	0.4817
Swiss Franc	0.5874	0.5903
French Franc	0.1596	0.1603
Japanese Yen	0.6685	0.6718
Dutch Guilder	0.4281	0.4302
Swedish Krona	0.0449	0.0451
Italian Lira	0.0449	0.0451
Belgian Franc	0.0449	0.0451

Other Currencies
Date: 7/2/1996

Currency	Bid	Offer
Bahraini Dinar	1.8620	1.8760
Lebanese Lira	0.044165	0.044750
Saudi Riyal	0.1870	0.1895
Kuwaiti Dinar	2.3070	2.3670
Qatari Riyal	0.1932	0.1945
Egyptian Pound	0.2000	0.2100
Omani Riyal	1.8330	1.8410
UAE Dirham	0.1922	0.1933
Greek Drachma	0.2785	0.3145
Cypriot Pound	1.4865	1.5485

1st Division Basketball Championship

Jazireh face Ahli tonight

By Aileen Bannayan
Jordan Times Staff Reporter

AMMAN — Al Jazireh's last chance of making their mark in the Kingdom's basketball championship comes Thursday night when they take on titleholders Al Ahli in a match anxiously awaited by fans and officials alike.

The reason for the anticipation is the fact that Al Jazireh had scored a 76-73 win over Al Ahli in their first round encounter. Al Jazireh's win against could make the competition more interesting by making it a three-way race provided Al Ahli beat Al Orthodoxy in their Feb. 15 clash. In that case Al Ahli, Al Jazireh and Al Orthodoxy will play a title-deciding round for the first time in the prestigious competition.

While predictions are difficult in the action-packed game of basketball, Al Jazireh seem in a difficult position to beat the titleholders tonight. Al Jazireh lost an easier opportunity against Al Orthodoxy when after leading throughout most of the match they lost to 85-75.

Al Orthodoxy had lost to Al Ahli 90-76 in the first round and they needed a win over Al Jazireh otherwise they would have dropped down to third place for

the first time.

Al Jazireh's form in this year's competition made them a serious contender and changed the nature of the competition. In earlier years, Al Orthodoxy and Al Ahli would easily beat all their opponents and only their clash would determine the winner.

To delight of fans and Jordan Basketball Federation officials, Al Jazireh's historic first round win over Al Ahli turned the competition upside down and left everyone utterly surprised.

Although Al Jazireh's players appeared in excellent form when they beat Al Ahli, it later turned out that the titleholders were affected by administrative snags and differences that apparently led to their unexpected defeat. Al Ahli had not lost to any team other than Al Orthodoxy for the past 20 years. Furthermore they have had an unrivalled dominance since 1992 and are looking for

their fourth consecutive title.

Realising that their two rivals were seriously threatening their crown, Al Ahli put their house in order and their players proved they were not about to give up their title easily when they scored a convincing 14-point win over Al Orthodoxy in the first round final of the competition.

Going into their match against Al Jazireh, Al Ahli now top the standings on score difference over Al Orthodoxy. Three more matches remain before the fight for the 1995 basketball title is concluded. The two other teams in the competition Al Ahli and Al Watani appear content with their fourth and fifth place standings and are indifferent about their results as they are not threatened by relegation. The sixth, Al Abbasi, became the team to drop to the second division after they pulled out prior to the start of the competition.

STANDINGS

	P	W	L	SF	SA	PTS
Ahli	6	5	1	523	369	11
Orthodoxy	6	5	1	557	407	11
Jazireh	6	4	2	445	367	10
Jalil	7	2	5	376	455	9
Watani	7	-	7	406	709	7

UEFA may negotiate new transfer deal

GENEVA (R) — UEFA general secretary Gerd Aigner, predicting dire consequences for soccer after the Bosman ruling, said on Tuesday European football's governing body might try to negotiate a new transfer system with the European Community.

Aigner said in an interview with Reuters on the eve of a meeting between UEFA and 33 of Europe's top clubs that he still had some hope an agreement could be reached to prevent what he said would be a chaotic situation in European soccer.

"(European Commissioner Karel) Van Miert says we should make proposals so obviously the door is still open," he said. "We should make proposals. We will discuss this."

Aigner would not be drawn on what the proposals might be but he said they would be talked about in three days of meetings with clubs this week and again at a meeting with national federations in London on February 18.

The EU has given UEFA a

deadline of March 1 to show it has changed its rules to conform with December's ruling in the Bosman case.

That ruling, following an action brought by Belgian player Jean-Marc Bosman, declared that the system of clubs paying transfer fees for players whose contract had ended was illegal in deals between EU member states.

It also declared that nationality restrictions in domestic and European competitions were illegal if EU nationals were counted as foreign players when playing for a club from another EU country.

UEFA is horrified by the ruling which makes its transfer regulations illegal and also effectively ends its three-plus rule, which restricts teams to a maximum three foreign and two assimilated players in European competitions.

Aigner insisted the EU was wrong to try to treat soccer as a normal economic activity. "I refuse to accept that a player is a worker and that football is a business."

NFL seeks to block franchise moves

WASHINGTON (R) —

National Football League commissioner Paul Tagliabue asked Congress on Tuesday to give the NFL power to block franchise moves, but got a sceptical reception from some lawmakers.

Tagliabue, at a House of Representatives Judiciary Committee hearing, said the threat of antitrust lawsuits was keeping the NFL from stopping teams from moving. He called for legislation giving the league limited immunity.

"Such legislation — to treat sports leagues as a single enterprise for internal decisions on such matters as franchise relocation — would not freeze the status quo. It simply would allow a sport league to exercise its reasonable business judgement without the threat of antitrust treble damage litigation end, in doing so, to take appropriate account of community interests and fan loyalties," Tagliabue said.

Last year, the Los Angeles Rams moved to St. Louis, the Los Angeles Raiders went to Oakland, the Cleveland Browns said they were going to Baltimore and the Houston Oilers announced plans to play in Nashville, Tennessee by 1998.

Suns deal Chicago 2nd straight loss

PHOENIX (R) — Suddenly the Chicago Bulls look vulnerable, and the Phoenix Suns look dangerous.

Elliot Perry, subbing for the injured Kevin Johnson, sank two free throws with 1:22 to play to snap a tie and Charles Barkley scored 35 points and made two key steals in the final minute as the Suns dealt the Bulls their second straight loss, 116-96 Tuesday.

Chicago, which lost to Denver Sunday but is still a league-best 41-5, lost consecutive games for the first time this season.

Michael Jordan scored 28 points and Scottie Pippen added 19 for the Bulls, who blew a 16-point second-quarter lead and lost consecutive games for the first time since last February.

"The bulls are the best team in the NBA. They're very good," said Barkley. "They can be beat if you play well."

Barkley, who also grabbed 16 rebounds, recorded his 11th consecutive double-double.

"Charles came out and showed the character he has as a great player and we didn't control him very well," Jordan said.

"He believes in himself and his team and that's why I love him so much. He showed everyone he still has a lot of heart and is one of the great players in the game."

Johnson, who had 21 points and 11 assists in just 32 minutes, strained his left hamstring with 4:19 remaining in the third quarter. Johnson was 12-of-13 from the field.

"That's just been my job since I've been here, so it's nothing new to me," Perry said about filling in for Johnson.

"It felt good to be able to come in and play a key part in a win," Perry finished with 12 points and a rookie Michael Finley added 14 while playing solid defence on Jordan.

"It was just a super effort by everybody," Phoenix coach Cotton Fitzsimmons said.

The Suns won for the second time in their last eight home games.

"We just stopped executing and Phoenix played very well," Jordan said. "It was one of those nights where I didn't feel comfortable at the line. If I knock my free throws down, I think we win the game."

No NBA team has gone through an entire season without losing two straight games. Last season, the Orlando Magic did not lose consecutive games until the 44th and 45th games.

In Denver, Cedric Ceballos scored 27 points as the Los Angeles Lakers rolled



Orlando Magic centre Shaquille O'Neal (32) goes high to score despite pressure from Sacramento Kings' centre

Duane Causwell during first action in the Orlando

over the Nuggets 99-78 for their 11th win in 12 games.

Magic Johnson added 16 points for Los Angeles, which improved to 3-1 since his return.

Dikembe Mutombo scored 20 points for Denver.

In Orlando, Penny Hardaway had 24 points and eight assists and Shaquille O'Neal added 22 points as the Magic improved to 25-0 at home this

season with a 112-102 victory over the Sacramento Kings.

Orlando has also won 32 straight home games since March of 1995. The Magic are two wins away from matching the all-time best start at home, 27 by the 1946-47 Washington Capitols.

Mitch Richmond scored 23 of his 25 points in the second half for Sacramento.

RESULTS

San Antonio	109	Charlotte	102
Cleveland	91	Boston	73
Orlando	112	Sacramento	102
Phoenix	106	Chicago	96
Milwaukee	114	Dallas	111
LA Lakers	99	Denver	78
Seattle	99	Houston	94

Gordeeva cannot imagine skating pairs again

NEW YORK (R) — Former world and Olympic pairs champion Ekaterina Gordeeva says she cannot imagine skating pairs again without her late husband Sergei Grinkov, according to an interview in the latest sports illustrated.

"I cannot even think of someone else's arms around me touching me," she tells the magazine. "Since I was 11, I touched only Sergei's hand. Never anyone else's. This way I can still think of Sergei around me when I'm skating."

Grinkov, who won Olympic golds with Gordeeva at Calgary in 1988 and again at Lillehammer in 1992, died of a heart attack last November 20 at the age of 28 while practising with her at Lake Placid, New York.

She describes him stopping skating, then feeling dizzy and hanging onto the sideboards. "He lay down very quietly, Marina (Zoueva, their choreographer) stopped the music. I kept asking what's happening, and he didn't tell me."

In the Sports Illustrated story, the mourning 24-year-old widow is described as finally being able to smile again by new year's day and telling herself "the new life is coming."

Gordeeva and her three-year-old daughter Daria shortly thereafter went "home" to Simsbury, Connecticut. "This condominium is the first place Sergei and I lived in that really felt like our home," Gordeeva is quoted as saying.

The couple had been together nearly 14 years — paired by the Soviet sports system when she was 16 and he was 15. Even before their marriage in April 1991, they were almost always together.

"He always, always took care of me," Gordeeva tells the magazine. "I didn't even know the feeling of what it's like to

see your husband go to a different town or a different country for business."

"It only happened one time. Sergei had a shoulder operation before our wedding. He went to Princeton, in New Jersey, and I was very, very worried. This is the only time I met him at the airport, and I brought with me one rose. After this, we never leave from each other again."

Gordeeva will skate solo in Hartford, Connecticut, in a February 27 tribute show to Grinkov which will also feature former world champions Kurt Browning, Katarina Witt and Brian Boitano. Proceeds from the show, which will be televised later, will help Gordeeva and her daughter.

At a private viewing last month at Ottawa's Minto Skating Club, where she had been training for the show, Gordeeva's emotional performance to Gustav Mahler's Sombre number 5 symphony included her kneeling on the ice and putting out her arms as if to hold Grinkov one last time.

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ANNOUNCEMENT

Notice to Danish citizens in Jordan

Danish citizens residing in Jordan are invited to register with the Royal Danish Consulate-General, 24 Sharif Abdul Hamid Sharaf Street, Shmeisani, P.O.Box. 222, Amman 11118. Registration may be made in person or by mail. Danish citizens who have already registered with the Consulate-General are invited to renew their registration - and in future to do so every year. Danish citizens are also invited to notify the Consulate-General upon permanent departure.

Meddelelse til danske statsborgere i Jordan

Danske statsborgere med fast bopæl i Jordan bedes lade sig registrere ved det danske Generalkonsulatet, 24 Sharif Abdul Hamid Sheraf Street, Shmeisani, P.O.Box. 222, Amman 11118. Registrering kan ske ved personlig henvendelse på Generalkonsulatet eller pr. brev. Danske statsborgere, som allerede har ladet sig registrere, bedes bekræfte, at de fortsat her fast bopæl i Jordan. En sådan genbekræftelse bedes foretaget hvert aar. Danske statsborgere, som flytter fra Jordan, bedes fore afregne give Generalkonsulatet meddelelse herom.

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Premier League's 21st week kicks off today

Hussein, Wihdat clash Friday

By a Jordan Times Staff Reporter

AMMAN — The Kingdom's top soccer teams Thursday enter the 21st week of the Premier League championship knowing very well that their upcoming results will determine the season's champion.

With Al Ramtha and Al Faisali trailing closely, currently leaders Al Wihdat will have to win their upcoming two matches against Al Hussein and Al Baqaa to secure their title regardless of the results of other teams.

Despite the fact that Al Wihdat only lost two matches in the competition so far, they only took the lead last week after Al Ramtha lost to Al Ahli and Al Faisali and dropped to second.

Al Ramtha and Al Faisali have easy opponents when they face already relegated Sahab and Russeifa.

While Al Ramtha's chances of regaining the lead depend on their win over Sahab and Al Wihdat's defeat to Al Hussein, current third placed Al Faisali's chances are more remote as they will need Al Wihdat's defeat or draw and Al Ramtha's loss.

With the last four teams relegated last week, Al Ahli meet Al Baqaa hoping to improve their record, while Al Jazireh meet Al Qadissieh who are currently fourth. Meanwhile fifth placed Kufsum meet Al Jalil.

Top scorers

Al Jalil's Ibrahim Abdul Hadi is the league top scorer with 17 goals

Jayes Tadros (Faisali)	12 goals
Bassam Khatib (Ahli)	11 goals
Abdullah Shiyab (Hussein)	11 goals
Hisham Abdul Mune'm (Wihdat)	9 goals
Riyad Azmi (Jazireh)	9 goals

Schedule of 21st week

Jazireh-Qadissieh	Thurs. 8/2
Faisali-Russeifa	Thurs. 8/2
Wihdat-Hussein	Fri. 9/2
Kufsum-Jalil	Fri. 9/2
Sahab-Ramtha	Fri. 9/2
Ahli-Baqaa	Sat. 10-2

Standings before 21st week

	P	W	D	L	GF	GA	PTS
Wihdat	20	12	6	2	38	19	42
Ramtha	20	12	4	4	29	12	40
Faisali	20	11	6	3	37	12	39
Qadissieh	20	10	5	5	37	21	35
Kufsum	20	9	8	3	29	20	35
Hussein	20	8	7	5	35	17	31
Ahli	20	8	7	5	32	20	31
Jazireh	20	8	6	6	36	24	30
Baqaa	20	6	3	11	28	45	21
Sahab	20	2	9	9	18	33	15
Jalil	20	2	3	15	27	62	9
Russeifa	20	—	—	20	15	82	—

Bowe's next fight will be in court

NEW YORK (AFP) — Heavyweight boxer Riddick Bowe and Time Warner Sports will go to court here March 11 to settle a contract dispute that could keep the U.S. fighter a matchup with Britain's Lennox Lewis.

A date was set in U.S. district court after three days of talks before judge Loretta Preska failed to achieve a deal. Rock Newman, Bowe's manager, contends a deal between Bowe and Time Warner is over. The company believes its deal renews with each Bowe triumph and remains in force. It plans to show a Lewis-Bowe fight in April.

But Newman contends

Bowe is free to sign a richer deal elsewhere because a 1994 fight against Buster Mathis Jr. in Atlantic City ended in a no contest after Bowe knocked out Mathis while the fighter was on one knee.

Since then, Bowe has received \$25 million for fights under the Time Warner contract without previously suggesting the deal was off.

"Even if he loses, the ability to end the contract is ours," Time Warner Sports chairman Seth Abraham said.

Newman said Bowe is "very angry at how 'the suits' up on Sixth Avenue are treating U.S."

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GOREN BRIDGE

WITH OMAR SHARIF
& TAMARA HIRSCH
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NORTH
♠ J 7 3
♥ 8 6 3
♦ A 7 5 2
♣ 8 3

WEST
♠ K 8 4 3
♥ 5 4
♦ K 3
♣ 10 7 5 2

EAST
♠ 10 6 5
♥ Q J 10 9 8
♦ 9 4
♣ Q J 4

SOUTH
♠ A Q 9
♥ A K 7
♦ Q 10 8
♠ A K 9 6

The bidding:
SNT Pass
Pass

Opening lead: Two of ♠

Watch every card played. Each has a story to tell that might lead you to the winning path. This deal, from a rubber bridge game at New York's renowned Regency Whist Club, is a prime example.

The auction was straightforward. All that remained was for South to bring home the tenuous contract.

West led the deuce of clubs, covered by the three and jack and taken by the king. Since there was no way to come to nine tricks without using dummy's diamond suit, declarer got things started by leading the queen. West covered with the king and was allowed to hold the trick. The defender reverted to clubs, and declarer captured East's queen with the ace and persisted with diamonds, leading the ten. Again West covered, and the jack was allowed to win the trick. West exited with the five of hearts, won in the closed hand.

Declarer cashed out dummy's three diamond tricks, discarding a heart and a club from hand. East parted with a heart and two spades, and West let go of two spades.

Declarer decided that East, holding the king, would not have sluffed two spades. Based on West's lead of the two of clubs and subsequent spade discards, South decided that West's probable distribution had been 4-2-3-4. So declarer came to hand with the king of hearts, removing West's only safe exit, and threw West in with a club. West could score two club tricks, but then had to lead a spade away from the king into declarer's major tenace. Three no trump bid and made.



Oscar de La Hoya works out at Top Rank Gym in Las Vegas in preparation for his upcoming Super Lightweight fight (Reuters photo)

Chavez, De La Hoya showdown nears

LOS ANGELES (AP) — Julio Cesar Chavez and Oscar de La Hoya, one win each away from facing each other in June, discussed that possibility at an uncharacteristically polite news conference on Monday.

Chavez meets Scott Walker in a 10-round non-title fight Friday night at Caesars Palace in Las Vegas, while De La Hoya faces Darryl Tyson in his first junior welterweight bout on the same card. That fight will be a 12-rounder.

Chavez, 36-1-1 with 78 knockouts, is the World Boxing Council's junior welterweight champion. De La Hoya, 20-0 with 18 knockouts, is the World Boxing

organisation lightweight champion, but is moving up five pounds in weight.

Promoter Bob Arum said Chavez and De La Hoya will meet in a long-anticipated bout June 7 at Caesars Palace if both beat their underdog opponents. Scott is 21-5 with 12 knockouts while Tyson is 47-8-1 with 24 knockouts.

Arum said he will guarantee Chavez and De La Hoya \$9 million each plus a percentage of the closed-circuit revenue. All that stands in the way are Walker and Tyson. "If I had my way, Oscar and Julio would not be fighting Friday night," Arum said. "I've seen too many high fights spoiled by these kind of tuneup fights."

De La Hoya, who turned

33 Sunday, called Chavez, 33, "his boyhood and current idol."

"I respect Julio so much that I asked Bob Arum to put me on Chavez' preliminary or undercard," De La Hoya said.

Chavez will fight last in the traditional main event position on the card.

Chavez said the fact that De La Hoya will be his 110th fight — assuming both win Friday night — is significant. "And it could possibly be my last," said Chavez, considered the greatest fighter ever to come out of Mexico. "A hundred professional fights, I've only had 20 and I'm already tired." De La Hoya said.

Magic says he wanted to be a Knick

NEW YORK (AFP) — Magic Johnson wanted to play for former coach Pat Riley and the New York Knicks but was denied an early return to the National Basketball Association by the Los Angeles Lakers, a report said.

Johnson, who returned the league last week after a retirement of more than four years, told the New York Post he discussed a return with Riley "every year" since leaving the Lakers in 1991.

Riley, who guided the Lakers to four NBA crowns with Johnson in a starring role, spent four seasons with the Knicks but left to guide Miami this season.

Knicks officials said they sought the rights to Johnson but talks never moved beyond initial stages because of Johnson's salary, which included a payment of \$15 million. Johnson will make \$2.5 million for his half-season with the Lakers and be a free agent when the campaign closes.

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Olympic venues get face-lift

ATLANTA (AFP) — Olympian demand on new and existing sports facilities have given organisers of the 1996 Summer Olympics unprecedented challenges as they prepare to host the world.

"Even though we have handled special events like the Super Bowl, we have never done anything on a scale of the Olympics," said Khalil Johnson, general manager of the Georgia Dome.

The 85,000-seat enclosed stadium will be the venue for Olympic basketball and gymnastics and in the centre of games' activities in downtown Atlanta.

"This will be an intense time for U.S.," Johnson said. "We will be hosting three or four events each day for 16 days, running nearly concurrently from 9 in the morning to 11 at night."

"Existing facilities such as the Georgia Dome must be adapted to the new demands placed upon them. Changes in access areas, tighter security needs, staff training and scheduling and making certain food products are those of Olympic sponsors are all details that must be completed before the first event begins."

New facilities pose their own special problems, even though they were constructed with the Olympics in mind. "The rationale was that

we were building not just for the Olympics, but for after-use," organising committee spokesman Doug Arnot said. "We didn't want to construct white elephants, so even these new facilities have to be adapted, especially in terms of getting people out to buses, then to our subway system and parking lots."

Crowd flow issues are a major concern. In downtown Atlanta, a typical day will feature: ☆ 30,000 people moving in and out of the Georgia Dome twice a day.

☆ 5,000 people at the neighbouring World Congress Centre every 45 minutes.

☆ 14,000 people at the Omni for every event.

☆ 7,000 broadcasters moving through the adjacent world broadcast centre.

☆ Throughs more attending activities at nearby Centennial Olympic park.

☆ But the Georgia Dome, the opportunities outweigh any difficulties.

"We've had permanent facility improvements," Johnson said. "We will gain international exposure. The new park creates a new front door for U.S. This is a significant historical event we're proud to be part of."

"And hey, we're not rocket scientists. It all boils down to people playing sports and having fun."

Carl Lewis skips 100-metre reunion

NEW YORK (AFP) — Carl Lewis received a rebuke from another former Olympic sprint champion here Tuesday for skipping a reunion of 100-metre Olympic champions.

"Whatever the case, Carl Lewis should be here," said Harrison Dillard, the 1948 Olympic sprint winner. "Someone of his stature, with everything he has achieved, should be here."

Dillard, at 72 the oldest surviving 100-metre Olympic champion, was joined by reigning 100-metre Olympic champion Linford Christie of

Britain and past winners Valery Borzov, Allan Wells, Hasely Crawford, Jim Hines, Bob Hayes, Bob Morrow and Lindy Remigio.

The gathering was in remembrance of the 60th anniversary of the stunning performance by Jesse Owens at the Berlin Olympics. The black American won four gold medals, set two world records and dashed Adolf Hitler's dreams of showing off Nazi superiority.

The reunion came at presentation ceremonies for the Owens Award, named for the 1936 Games star.

Van Almsick pulls out of finale

BONN (R) — World champion Franziska Van Almsick on Tuesday unexpectedly pulled out of this weekend's World Cup series finale in the German town of Gelsenkirchen.

The German swimmer's manager Werner Koester said: "Looking ahead to the Olympics, two weeks of hard training are more important than the World Cup."

However, Van Almsick is known to be in dispute with the German Swimming Federation (DSV) over sponsorship.

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هاتفنا عن الاتصال

Millions are threatened in Sudan - U.N.

NAIROBI (Agencies) — The United Nations said on Wednesday a stepped-up civil war in southern Sudan was threatening humanitarian conditions and appealed for over \$100 million to assist some 4.5 million famished people.

"Intensified fighting in areas of southern Sudan is threatening to undermine the precarious health and nutritional status of vulnerable people," the U.N.'s umbrella organisation Operation Lifeline Sudan said in a statement issued in Nairobi.

The statement said the most affected areas were in northern parts of Bahr Al Ghazal, Jonglei and Upper Nile provinces.

Black African rebels of the Sudan People's Liberation Army (SPLA) based in the south have been fighting a succession of governments led by northerners since 1984, either for greater autonomy or full independence.

An estimated 1.3 million people have died during the 12-year-old civil war from the conflict and related famine. Nearly three million southerners have fled their homes.

"Despite increased efforts in 1995 to control Guinea worm and immunisable diseases, repeated insecurity forced many health centres to close. In recent weeks relief staff have reported a rise in disease outbreaks, including typhoid and diarrhoeal diseases," the statement added.

The statement said the cash-strapped world body would need about \$107 million to assist the war-affected civilians in southern Sudan, transition zones between northern and southern Sudan, and displaced camps around the capital Khartoum.

Of this amount, the U.N. World Food Programme (WFP) is appealing for \$40 million for food and transport. According to the WFP some 2.1 million people risk starvation without food aid as stocks have been depleted between April to August.

"Priority activities include emergency food aid for an estimated 2.1 million war-affected people, and projects to assist some 4.25 million people in sectors of health, nutrition and special care for children," it said.

(Continued on page 7)

189 said killed in charter jet crash

SANTO DOMINGO, Dominican Republic (Agencies) — Boeing 757 carrying German tourists home from the Caribbean crashed into shark-infested waters off the Dominican Republic. A total of 189 people, including four children, were on board.

Lightning may have caused the crash, the plane's Turkish owners said.

"Civil aviation authorities we spoke to by phone from Dominica half an hour ago said the crash may have been caused by lightning," Muhip Ismen, president of Birgen Air, told Reuters in Istanbul.

"It reached 6,000 feet (2,000 metres) and suddenly disappeared from radar screens," he said.

The plane had been leased from Birgen by charter airline Alas Nacionales for the day. It crashed into the Atlantic Ocean shortly after take-off from the Dominican airport of Puerto Plata late on Tuesday.

U.S. Coast Guard boats and helicopters searching for survivors off the Dominican Republic's north coast Wednesday spotted bodies, empty life rafts and debris but no survivors. At least eight bodies were recovered but divers were wary of entering the water.

The charter aircraft was headed for Frankfurt and Berlin. A total of 176 passen-

gers and 13 crew members were on board. Eleven of the crew were Turkish and two were Dominican, according to Birgen.

"The initial report that we've got is that there's debris in the water, several life rafts that have been seen and also reports of bodies in the water. There has been no report of survivors thus far," said Lieutenant Stephen Leslie of the U.S. coast guard in Miami.

David Gragengeter, an emergency rescue official with the Coast Guard in Puerto Rico, said rain was falling in the area and seas were reported to be rough, complicating rescue efforts.

Coast Guard Lieutenant Benedict Lincoln in San Juan said coast guard pilots had spotted sharks in the area of the crash site.

"The area is shark-infested," he said. "It obviously would hamper recovery of either survivors or bodies from the water."

The aircraft had been in the air only five minutes when a radar operator noted that it had turned around and was headed back to land, said Luis Flores Mota, a spokesman with the Dominican Republic's civil air agency.

There was no radio contact with the plane to indicate there was a problem, Mr. Mota said.

Perry: U.S. cooperating with Middle Eastern countries to bring about change in Iraq

WASHINGTON (AFP) — The United States is cooperating with a number of countries in the Middle East to accelerate the demise of the government of Saddam Hussein, U.S. Defence Secretary William Perry said Tuesday.

"I think there are things which we and Jordan and other nations in the region can do to accelerate the demise of the present regime in Iraq. We are already cooperating in some actions," Mr. Perry said in a speech before the Washington Institute for Near East Policy.

He did not give details as to the nature of the actions. Mr. Perry called Iran, Iraq and Libya "the world's three most dangerous proliferators" of nuclear weapons.

But he warned that the United States must also be ready to face a conventional threat from Iran and Iraq. "Iraq still has the largest military in the region and it shows no signs of foregoing its belligerent, aggressive stance," he said.

"Iran also has a growing military and its aggressive posture in the Strait of Hormuz is a threat to the free passage of oil from the Gulf to the United States and friends and allies," the secretary of defence said. The Strait of Hormuz separates Iran from the United

Arab Emirates. To contain "Iraqi and Iranian threats" in the region, the U.S. strategy has been to deploy air and naval forces in the region, position equipment there and help step up the defence of other Middle East countries, Mr. Perry said.

"Our security relations with these countries are at a historic high," he said, adding that improved relations mean the U.S. could deploy the same number of troops to the region as for the Gulf war in only a week rather than the month it took for 1991 conflict.

Mr. Perry said the United States will "continue to underwrite Israel's military with 1.8 billion (dollars) ... and we will strengthen our cooperative efforts to protect Israel."

The secretary added that Israel's backing of the sale of U.S. F-16 fighter jets to Jordan shows "a new thinking by the Israeli government. Israel understands the important role that Jordan's armed forces play in the stability in the Kingdom and of the region," he said.

Mr. Perry added that if Israel and Syria reach a peace accord, the United States "will work to deepen peace and security for all the nations of the region."

Queen Alia remembered

Friday, Feb. 9, marks the 18th anniversary of the tragic death of Queen Alia, who died in a helicopter crash while returning from an inspection trip to a hospital in Tafleeh.

Queen Alia, born Alia Baha Uddin Toukan, was married to His Majesty King Hussein in December 1971. They had two children - Their Royal Highnesses Princess Haya and Prince Ali - and they adopted Abir Muheissen in 1972.



Arafat slow in breaking from past

OCCUPIED JERUSALEM (AFP) — Palestinian leader Yasser Arafat, anxious to elicit Israeli concessions and satisfy his own public opinion, is moving slowly in amending the Palestinian charter's calls for the elimination of Israel.

Palestinian analysts said Wednesday that Mr. Arafat was likely to miss the end of April deadline agreed with Israel for changing the charter.

Under Palestinian-Israeli peace accords, references to Israel's destruction in the charter must be revoked within two months of the newly-elected Palestinian council's first meeting. That is expected later this month.

"I think it will take more time and there will be a lot of bargaining between the Israelis and Palestinians," said Ghassan Khatib, head of the Jerusalem Media and Communications Centre.

A Palestine Liberation Organisation (PLO) Executive Committee meeting ended Tuesday without setting a date to convene the Palestinian National Council (PNC), the parliament-in-exile, which has the power to amend the charter.

The Executive Committee did begin a discussion on the possibility of drafting a new charter rather than amending the existing one, which was

drawn up in 1964 and amended in 1968.

But it was not clear if this would satisfy Israel.

The charter says there are no Jewish ties to Palestine and it rejects the legitimacy of Jews having a nation state. It calls for liberation through the use of armed struggle.

While mainstream Palestinians consider the charter outdated, some also believe that it correctly outlines historic wrongs they have suffered.

An opinion poll taken last month by the Nablus-based Centre for Palestine Research and Studies (CPRS) among 3,000 respondents showed the public to be evenly split on the idea of scrapping the anti-Israel articles.

Replacing the charter with a new one would probably gain broader backing, said Nadir Said, a CPRS pollster.

"Psychologically it is much easier to make a new one because it does not look like giving in to the Israelis," he said.

Right-wing Israelis say that to this date the charter still reflects the true intentions of the PLO. The Israeli foreign ministry, meanwhile, signalled flexibility on whether a new, moderate charter would be acceptable.

"It is up to them to choose the procedure," Yigal Palmor, an official at the minis-

Christopher presses PLO chief on charter

BEIT HANUN (AFP) — U.S. Secretary of State Warren Christopher urged Palestinian leader Yasser Arafat Wednesday to develop democracy in his autonomy government and to revoke references to Israel's destruction from the Palestinian national covenant.

Speaking after a one-hour meeting here, Mr. Christopher congratulated Mr. Arafat for his election last month as Palestinian president and for the parallel election of a legislative council to govern Palestinians living in the West Bank and Gaza Strip.

But he stressed that the polls were "only one step" towards forming "an accountable government."

"A Palestinian council

needs to be convened and there needs to be established an independent judiciary in order to ensure respect for law and human rights," he said.

"We also discussed the commitments of the chairman and the Palestinians to amend the covenant and the chairman confirmed that commitment and said they would carry it out in a timely fashion," he said.

"It is essential for members of the council to fulfil their commitment to amend the covenant and to take all possible steps to prevent terrorism," he said.

At a joint press conference Wednesday, Mr. Arafat reiterated his pledge concerning the covenant but offered

(Continued on page 7)

Rights group assails Egyptian press law

CAIRO (AFP) — Relations between press and government in Egypt are in crisis after a year in which 120 journalists and writers were interrogated by the authorities or taken to court, a human rights group said Wednesday.

The Centre for Human Rights Legal Aid said in a report that freedom of expression came under increasing pressure in 1995 because of new government restrictions and Islamic fundamentalists using the courts to silence critics.

"For the first time ever, two journalists were tried before a military court. Physical assaults on journalists also increased, in particular during the legislative elections in November 1995," it said.

Two journalists — Abed Al Bakri, editor-in-chief of Al Ahali newspaper, and Tharwat Badawi, a reporter for the same newspaper — were jailed for two years and fined \$15,000 each, the report said.

A third, Magdi Ahmad Hussein, editor-in-chief of Al Shaub newspaper was jailed for a year and fined \$4,500 for libelling the son of the interior minister, it added.

The group said 12 editors were currently facing trial and possible prison sentences, while the authorities were pursuing 43 journalists under a controversial new press law that brought in jail sentences of up to 15 years.

Its report also focused on "attempts by Islamic fundamentalists to silence writers and intellectuals with accusations of apostasy and offending Islam."

It said fundamentalists had used the judiciary to file cases against intellectuals, using the legal tool of "hisba," allowing any offended Muslim to take action — and "direct claim" which bypasses the prosecution.

Some 51 writers, artists and journalists were taken to court in 1995 using direct claim, it added.

Sydney Harbour Bridge 'is a crumbling hazard'

SYDNEY (R) — One of Australia's best-known icons, the Sydney Harbour Bridge, is crumbling away in its old age and has begun to drop rusted chunks of metal on to pedestrians below, an opposition politician said Wednesday. New South Wales state opposition politician George Souris said a piece of rusted metal fell from the bridge last month, landing harmlessly among thousands of people using the bridge's public walkway beneath the steel arch. But the state's roads and traffic authority denied the bridge had fallen into disrepair, saying a check of the bridge Wednesday found no problems. "I don't think the bridge could fall apart, but the worst case scenario is that perhaps for a number of years little pieces will fall and perhaps will hit somebody and kill them," said Mr. Souris, opposition roads spokesman. "This is Australia's number one icon and if you don't nurse this bridge as we should, then what else is worth nursing as icons," he told Reuters, after showing journalists the small chunk of metal. He said he had photographs of other rusted parts of the bridge.

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NEWS IN BRIEF

Amir lawyers seek 'emotional order' defence

TEL AVIV (API) — Attorneys for Yitzhak Rabin's confessed assassin plan to adopt a new strategy and argue that their client suffered from emotional disorders, Israel Radio said Wednesday. Under an amendment of Israel's criminal code, a defendant convicted of murder can get less than a life term if it is proven that, while basically sane, he suffers from emotional problems. Rabin assassin Yigal Amir, 25, faces life plus 49 years in prison if convicted of murder and conspiracy. Jonathan Ray Goldberg, one of Amir's three attorneys, said Wednesday he knew nothing of a new strategy. "I'm surprised to hear that," he said. Amir's two court-appointed attorneys could not immediately be reached for comment. Amir's defence has been in disarray, with two defence lawyers quitting last month over Amir's insistence to turn the trial into a platform for his militant political beliefs.

U.N. warns situation in Somalia is fragile

NAIROBI (AFP) — Somalia's humanitarian situation is fragile and could turn critical in some regions if security conditions worsen, the leader of a U.N. mission warned Wednesday on his return from a six-day visit to the nation. Manuel Aranda da Silva, director of the Complex Emergency Division of the U.N. Department of Humanitarian Affairs in New York, led a mission to Mogadishu, the southern port city of Kismayo as well as Hargeisa, self-styled capital of the breakaway "republic of Somaliland" in the north and its Indian Ocean port at Bosaso from Feb. 1 to 6. "The humanitarian situation in Somalia is fragile and has the potential to become critical in some regions should security conditions worsen, thereby impeding the delivery of assistance, or should there be an unfavourable harvest in 1996," Mr. Da Silva said in a statement.

Wanted: Israeli ambassador for Egypt

TEL AVIV (AFP) — The Israeli foreign ministry has run into trouble trying to find a candidate willing to take over the job of ambassador to Egypt, leaving the current diplomat stuck in the post, the daily Yediot Aharonot reported Wednesday. The foreign ministry refused to comment on the report, which said that "security restrictions" and difficulties imposed on the ambassador in Cairo had discouraged potential candidates. In the meantime the current envoy, David Sultan, who asked for a new posting after three-and-a-half years in Cairo and was recently named to Israel's embassy in Canada, must remain in the Egyptian capital pending his replacement, the newspaper said. It said that every diplomat approached by the foreign ministry commission charged with selecting ambassadors had turned down the job. The posts of deputy ambassador, press attaché and first secretary are also empty, it said. The Yediot quoted diplomats who have served in Egypt as complaining about the cool relations they had with their Egyptian counterparts and others.

EU aid for Palestinian parliament

OCCUPIED JERUSALEM (AFP) — The European Union (EU) will give the Palestinians \$3.75 million in aid to help them set up their newly-elected parliament, a European spokesman said Wednesday. "The aid has been approved and it can be mobilised quickly," Thomas Dupla, the European Commission representative in Jerusalem, told AFP. He said the EU would also give technical assistance to the legislative council, whose 88 members were elected in the first Palestinian polls on Jan. 20.

Sweden hits Israeli torture law

TEL AVIV (AFP) — Swedish Foreign Minister Lena Hjelm-Wallen objected Wednesday to Prime Minister Shimon Peres over Israeli draft legislation which human rights groups say would legalise torture against suspects.

After their meeting Ms. Hjelm-Wallen said she had put forward Stockholm's objections to the proposed law, which would authorise Israeli security forces to use "moderate physical pressure" against people suspected of involvement in planning or carrying out anti-Israeli attacks.

"I understand the background," she said after their encounter, "but in principle I have another view."

The draft law was drawn up last month by Justice Minister David Libai and would permit the use of physical force by the internal security agency, Shin Bet, in investigations.

Mr. Libai said that all methods of interrogation permitted by the bill, including

the violent shaking of suspects, would be "in line with the International Convention Against Torture."

The bill is due to be presented to the Knesset, or parliament, in coming weeks and has drawn criticism from a wide array of Israeli, Palestinian and international human rights groups.

Pierre Sane, secretary-general of Amnesty International, met with Knesset members Tuesday to voice his organisation's opposition to the bill.

Ms. Hjelm-Wallen also held talks Wednesday with her Israeli counterpart Ehud Barak and is due to meet Palestinian President Yasser Arafat on Thursday in Gaza City.

In addition to her differences with the Israeli government over the Shin Bet bill, Ms. Hjelm-Wallen has angered Israeli officials with plans to visit the Orient House, the unofficial Palestinian headquarters in East Jerusalem.

She is due to meet Saturday at the Orient House with Faisal Husseini, the Palestinian National Authority's top official for Jerusalem affairs.

Israel has repeatedly asked foreign officials not to go to the Orient House, saying such visits boost Palestinian claims over East Jerusalem.

The Jewish state insists that a unified Jerusalem is the capital of Israel, while Palestinians want to make East Jerusalem the capital of an independent state.

Mr. Peres' office said he told the Swedish diplomat that only cultural events are authorised at the Orient House. "If this office becomes a political centre, I wouldn't hesitate to close it," the premier warned.

But Mr. Hjelm-Wallen brushed off the objections.

"I am doing what all ministers from the European Union do, namely I am going to the Orient House meeting privately, as a social call," she said.

Asia, Middle East discuss OSCE-style organisation

ALMATY (AFP) — Diplomats from 15 Asian and Middle Eastern countries from China to Russia began a two-day meeting Wednesday in the Kazakh capital Almaty to prepare the creation of a new regional security forum.

The ambitious project is to build an organisation capable of preventing conflict on the Asian continent, one of the most conflict-torn areas of the world, modelled on the Organisation for Security and Cooperation (OSCE) in Europe.

Kazakhstan's foreign minister, Kassimzomrat Tokayev, told delegates from the 15 participating countries and seven observer nations that the aim was "to create a preventive diplomatic mechanism in Asia."

"A continuous dialogue on security in Asia is needed and will end with the creation of a structure or forum between

all the countries," said Egypt's ambassador to Kazakhstan and Russia, Reda Sherata.

Russia's deputy foreign minister, Alexander Panov, told the conference that "this meeting proves that the process of creating this new structure is on a good footing."

"Russia is very interested in being surrounded by a belt of stable countries," he said.

"Two-thirds of Russia is in Asia and that justifies our presence here."

The proposed forum would mark a new phase in international relations in the Central Asian region, which has long been ruled by either the Russian empire or the Soviet Union, with regional states having little room for diplomatic manoeuvre.

"Often in the past, ideas of collective security in Asia

were proposed by the Soviet Union, which was suspect. Today, this is no longer the case and an Asian solidarity has appeared," a Western diplomat who asked not to be named told AFP.

The name of the proposed body would be the Conference on Interaction and Confidence Building Measures in Asia. No target date has been set for setting it up.

The conference was to continue Thursday in preparation for future meetings of the countries' foreign ministers and heads of state and government.

The Almaty daily Kasakhstanskaya Pravda reported that the diplomats were trying "to draw up three founding texts: a declaration of principles on relations between members, a document on procedural rules at meetings, and definitions of its

Scorsese loses battle against Swedish censorship

STOCKHOLM (AFP) — American film director Martin Scorsese has agreed to show his latest movie, Casino in Sweden despite losing a censorship battle with Swedish authorities.

The daily Dagens Nyheter (DN) said Tuesday, Sweden's Supreme Administrative Court recently upheld a decision by the country's censorship authorities to cut two violent scenes from the movie, Casino.

The result, about 100 seconds of the film will be cut out before being shown to Swedish audiences. Casino, starring Sharon Stone, and Robert De Niro, shows the mafia in Las Vegas in the 1970s.

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